

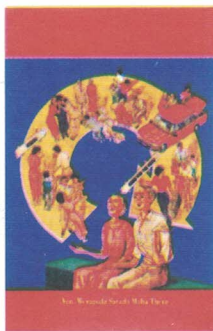
Parents & Children

Key to Happiness



by
Ven. Weragoda Sarada Maha Thero

COVER STORY



The cover shows the cycle of life of a mother and father who have become the victims of the neglect of their own child. The story begins with a portrayal of the immense joy the young parents experience, bringing up their infant son. They caress him and fondle him and their happiness knows no bounds. The child has brought in fulfilment to their lives.

Eventually, as the child grows up, the parents take him to school. This is an event they have been looking forward to. Their child has now stepped into the larger world outside the confines of the home where he spent his infancy.

After passing through schools, the child has now reached the level of higher education. At his graduation the parents are overjoyed. They just cannot believe that this is their little infant, who has attained these academic heights.

For the son, it is now time to get married and begin his own family. His fond parents lavish their blessings on their son and his young wife. Their hopes for their little child have now been fully realised. They can look forward, they hope, to a settled, tranquil life, under the love and care of their son and his wife.

But, as time goes by when they have their own children, they resent their presence in the house. They have become a nuisance. They decide that the parents now belong in a Home for the Aged. The old parents are left to a lonely, empty life. All their hopes are gone. The old parents are at last left only with each other in the whole darkening world.

This does not depict a general situation at all. Parents who suffer this fate could very well be a minute fraction of all parents. But if even a handful of parents are allowed to come to this pass, the world should feel unhappy about it. Their privation should be a challenge to all to see that world's parents are duly cared for.



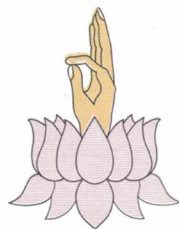


PARENTS & CHILDREN

Key to Happiness



by
Ven. Weragoda Sarada Nayaka Maha Thero



THE SINGAPORE BUDDHIST MEDITATION CENTRE

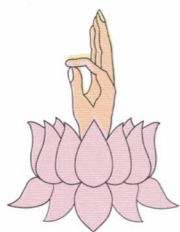
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DEDICATION



His Excellency Mahinda Rajapaksa,
President, Democratic Socialist Republic of Sri Lanka,
The Supreme Saviour of the Noble Motherland brought the
Three-fold Sri Lanka under one glorious Lion Flag.

This book titled “Parents and Children – Key to Happiness”
is dedicated with due honour, respect and solemnity to
His Excellency Mahinda Rajapaksa, President, Democratic
Socialist Republic of Sri Lanka, as our tribute for the
historical mission he fulfilled, by vanquishing the evil
forces of darkness and destruction, represented by ruthless
Terrorists, restoring Peace, Harmony and Tranquillity to this
Island of Righteousness ushering in a new era of brilliance
for the eternal Dispensation of the Supremely Enlightened Buddha,
and for this noble land, Sri Lanka.

Ciram Jayatu Maha Purisa!

Ven. Weragoda Sarada Nayaka Maha Thero
Chief Prelate, Singapore

24. 06.2012





*His Excellency Mahinda Rajapaksa,
President, Democratic Socialist Republic of Sri Lanka,*

*The Supreme Saviour of the Noble Motherland brought the Three-fold Sri Lanka
under one glorious Lion Flag.*





The parents are the highest beings in the world.
They are the first teachers.
They are worthy of being given offerings.
Parents are by nature sympathetic to their children.

*Brahmāti mātā pitaro
Pubbācariyāti vuccare
Āhuneyyaca puttānam
Pajāya anukampakō*

If someone, who can truly afford,
does not look after one's parents,
who, their youth spent, have reached old age,
such a person is an outcaste.
Such neglect of old parents, is conducive to one's downfall.

*Yo mātaramvā pitaramvā
Jinnakam gata yobbanam
Pahusanto na bharati
Tam jaññā vasalo iti*

O Bhikkhus,
there are two types of people,
one can never be grateful to, sufficiently.
They are mothers and fathers.

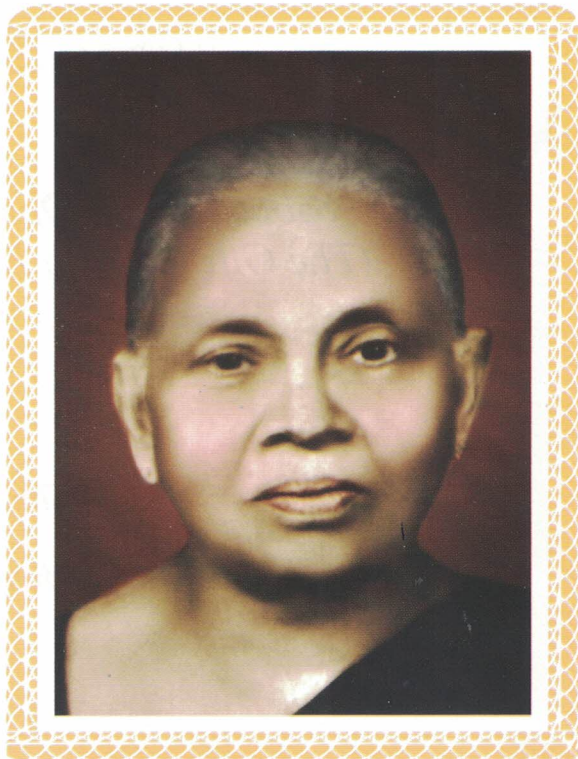
*"Dvinnāham bhikkhave na
suppatikaram vādami,
mātucca, pitucca."*

"THE BUDDHA"





SALUTATION



Mr. & Mrs. D. A. Rajapaksa

The noble parents who bestowed upon Sri Lanka, one of the greatest heroic sons of this land - President Mahinda Rajapaksa, the liberator of modern Sri Lanka who made it possible for the masses of this sacred land to breathe freely without even a tinge of fear.

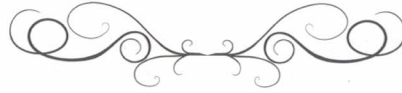
May they attain the Eternal Bliss of Nibbana.

Ven. Weragoda Sarada Nayaka Maha Thero
Chief Prelate, Singapore





ACKNOWLEDGEMENT



“Sabba Danam Dhamma Danam Jinati”
(The Gift of Truth Excels All Other Gifts)

This book

Parents & Children - Key to Happiness

is

sponsored by

Mr. Ng Wu Hin & Family

*May all the members of his family be healthy,
prosperous and long-lived with the blessings of the Triple Gem
and the great merit acquired by sponsoring this important publication.*

Ven. Weragoda Sarada Nayaka Maha Thero
Chief Prelate, Singapore





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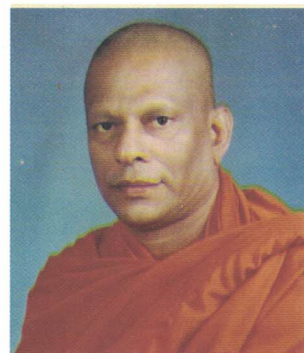




INTRODUCTION

by

Ven. Weragoda Sarada Nayaka Maha Thero
Chief Prelate, Singapore



The link between parents and children has existed since time began. It is this relationship that has ensured the persistent march of life in all its astonishing variety. In human society, parents and children continue to nourish life in a perpetual circle. The children eventually grow into parents and bring other children into being. This cycle goes on and on. Each generation adds refinements to this cycle of human continuity. For primitive societies, this link that binds the parents to children and, in consequence, one generation to a succeeding generation, was a form of relationship largely dictated by natural instinct. But, as the swirl of history swept mankind forward into succeeding civilizations, the link between parents and children became a matter of culture. The ties between parents and children started acquiring their own rites, rituals and value systems.

As time went on, a religious dimension, too, entered into it. Whatever may have been the stages through which this basic human relationship evolved, it was unmistakably propelled by a central dynamism - love and affection. Whatever may be the other factors present, this predominant human relationship could not survive if mutual love and affection were missing in the equation. In the human condition today, mankind seems to have reached an impasse, in which this vital factor of love is either missing or is in imminent danger of total erosion. The present work, "Parents & Children - Key to Happiness", is an attempt to alert people to this serious human crisis. If a deep awareness is built, it will invariably lead to adequate action. It is the earnest hope of the publishers of this work that anyone reading this book will be impelled to take whatever remedial measures one could adopt, at least in one's own domestic circle.

Time for adequate action is now. Evil can overtake even the best-managed societies at an alarmingly fast rate. Widespread juvenile deviation from accepted social norms, to the disturbing detriment of the established order, is a frightening fact even in advanced societies. What do we do to save the world's children from the tightening clutches of sinister influences? Do we punish the parents if the children went wrong? The most feasible and meaningful strategy is to awaken both the parents and children to this impending social catastrophe. Mankind must work together to save children and parents and, so, to save itself. We have dedicated ourselves to the production and publishing of this work with determination and commitment in the fullest awareness that this work will contribute, at least a little, towards ensuring wholesome relations between parents and children.

We are hopeful that those who read this work will be persuaded to contribute whatever they can, however small it is, to see that relations between the children and their parents will improve for the good of the whole of humanity. Here, we must have the words of Edmund Burke as the guiding motto for the effort we should make. Said Edmund Burke, "He is to be blamed most who does nothing because what he can do is so little."

In Metta

Ven. Weragoda Sarada Maha Thero





DEDICATION

TO

His Excellency Mahinda Rajapaksa,
President, Democratic Socialist Republic of Sri Lanka.

I consider it a great privilege indeed to be able to dedicate to Your Excellency, this special edition of the work titled “Parents and Children – Key to Happiness.”

In the long line of Sri Lanka’s rulers, extending for over 2500 years, you have performed an unforgettable historical task, by restoring freedom, happiness, peace and harmony to this sacred land, by eradicating the evil forces that devastated our mother land. Your Excellency rescued not only the people and the property but also our traditional religion-Buddhism, along with our spiritual sites. Without even a trace of exaggeration, I can firmly state that Your Excellency’s victorious deeds extend beyond the achievements of our ancient Monarch Dutugamunu – the Hero – King of Sri Lanka. He had to contend only with the evil forces within this land. On the other hand Your Excellency had to grapple with obstacles from lands beyond our shores. Your Excellency emerged victorious, ensuring not only peace and harmony but even the atmosphere to breathe freely, without even a tinge of fear.

We earnestly hope that, because of the unparalleled and heroic services you have performed and also because of the protection you afforded to the Dispensation of the Supreme Buddha, Your Excellency will be the life-long leader of our noble and sacred land.

In any other country, if a hero of the calibre of H. E. President Mahinda Rajapaksa appeared at a time of deep national crisis and eradicated the deadly threat and restored peace and harmony, such a hero would invariably be made the life-long leader of the land. Besides, the grateful people enjoying their new-found Freedom will undoubtedly deify him, in unison, as the custodian deity of the country. Although, some people whose memory is very short, will not honour him that way, the masses of this land who fully remember the relief given them by His Excellency will without any hesitation make him the life-long leader of the land and will look upon him as the God who liberated our Mother Country.

After a long span of life, I wish Your Excellency to be reborn as a guardian deity of Sri Lanka, to ensure eternal protection of this great land. While dedicating this spiritual work to Your Excellency, may I gratefully present this work to the ever-fresh memory of your illustrious parents, for endowing a great son of your noble calibre to our motherland Sri Lanka.

May you be happy, healthy and long-lived.

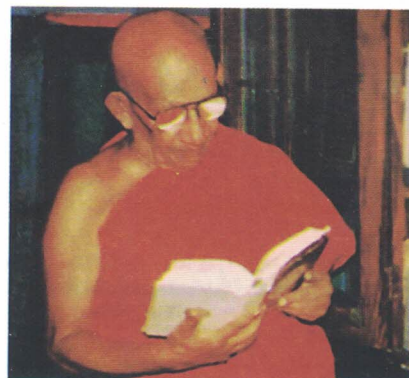
With Metta,

Ven. Weragoda Sarada Nayaka Maha Thero
Chief Prelate, Singapore





PREFACE



by

Ven. Balangoda Ananda Maitreya Maha Nayaka Thero, Ph.D., D.Litt.
Former Vice Chancellor, Sri Jayawardhanapura University

I am extremely happy to extend my heartiest felicitations to Ven. Weragoda Sarada Maha Thero, for the distinguished contribution he has made to world literature, by publishing the present work - "Parents & Children - Key to Happiness". Ven. Sarada Maha Thero has to his credit more than 70 publications to date. Of these, the majority deal with themes that teach morals, religious tenets, Buddhist thoughts and philosophy.

But the current publication breaks new ground as it takes up quite constructively and appealingly a topical issue that affects all people on Earth.

The present book is titled "Parents & Children - Key to Happiness". I cannot help but be highly impressed by this book, because it takes a comprehensive view of a crisis in human relations, that is at the heart of today's global turbulence. If Man has to avoid his impending fate of fast becoming an endangered species, he has to rethink his total lifestyle, which is rapidly deteriorating into a dehumanized way of existence. Ven. W. Sarada Maha Thero defines this contemporary alienation of children, from the sustaining traditions of the past, leading to troubling disaffection, in many areas of society, between parents and the younger generation.

Ven. W. Sarada Maha Thero does not stop at defining the problem. He proposes a series of solutions, in which a deep spiritual dimension is also present.

As a piece of communication, Ven. Sarada Maha Thero's work will reach both adult and juvenile audiences equally, as its visual element is attractive to the moderns who are, to a great extent, image-oriented.

I have already praised the considerable skills and the modern outlook of Ven. Sarada Maha Thero, when I spoke an introductory word to his "Treasury of Truth - Illustrated Dhammapada". What remains for me to do here is to upgrade what I said there, adding several pluses to the sentiments I have already expressed in that previous context. Or else, using a contemporary system of evaluation, I should say, that Ven. W. Sarada Maha Thero's book "Parents & Children - Key to Happiness", is a five-star publication.

In Metta

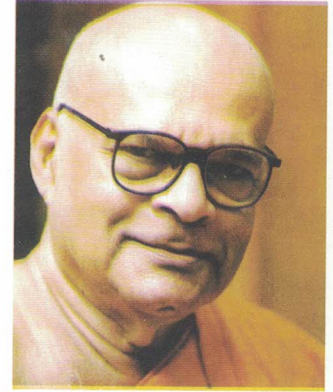
B. Ananda maitreya

Ven. Balangoda Ananda Maitreya Maha Nayaka Thero





MESSAGE



by

Ven. Dr. Kirinde Dhammananda Maha Nayaka Thero, PH.D. D.LITT.
Chief Prelate, Malaysia

Ven. Weragoda Sarada Maha Thero, Chief Monk, Singapore Buddhist Meditation Centre, has added yet another illustrious work to the fragrant garland of Buddhist books he has already published. When Ven. Sarada Maha Thero published his "Treasury of Truth - Illustrated Dhammapada", many would have thought that here was a publishing peak, beyond which there could be no progress. But, with his current publication "Parents & Children - Key to Happiness" he has amply demonstrated that his thoughts are ever-escalating and that he possesses a remarkable gift for perpetual betterment in his publishing efforts.

His present work is topical for any age and any place. Defined that way the book is a world classic, which has an abiding meaning for the whole of mankind. The subject - matter of the present work never ages, as the close relationship between parents and children never gets dated. Without any hesitation whatsoever I can unreservedly endorse the view that the Key to human happiness, is enshrined, without any doubt, within the wholesome relations between the father and the mother on the one hand, and the relations between parents and children on the other.

Mankind in our day has paid grievously whenever the world thought it fit to act with no thought whatsoever about the feelings that naturally exist between parents and children. The proliferation of such crimes as drug-addiction, futile juvenile violence, heart-rending forms of meaningless vandalism, can be traced to the disruptive practices of a younger generation that unfortunately has not benefited from close, healthy and wholesome relations with their parents, their teachers and their elders.

A book like the present is a felt need to bring back the alienated younger generation to the right path of social responsibility and love and affection towards parents. What is impressive about this book is the emphasis it places on the need for mutual love -parents towards children and, in turn, children towards parents.

The book is designed in such a way that it will have a very wide appeal to readers at many levels. The visual component of the work is a sure lure to capture the attention of the younger readers. While congratulating Ven. W. Sarada Maha Thero for his steady service to Buddhism and to the masses, I uphold this work as a highly fitting moral and spiritual guidance to the people of our day.

In Metta

Ven. Dr. Kirinde Dhammananda Maha Nayaka Thero





PRESIDENT MESSAGE



The present work, "Parents and Children – Key to Happiness, represents the keenness of the Singapore Buddhist Meditation Centre, to be practical and pragmatic in our approach to our publishing programme.

The issue, that forms the theme of the present work, appeals to people everywhere in today's world. The authoritative textual material of this work is lavishly supported by illustrations, giving the profound message of the book, a compelling graphic eloquence.

If the human race were to lead a life of happiness and fulfilment in this 21st century, there should be greater harmony between parents and children. In that a context, mankind will be able to traverse the 21st century unscathed.

This work is of great importance to both children and adults alike since it provides guidance to all, to meet the challenges posed by life, with courage and assurance. In today's world, the children are highly vulnerable as they can easily be victimized by evil forces and unscrupulous individuals.

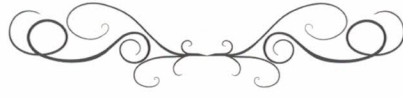
The moral path illuminated by this work, will enable both adults and children, to find an unerring path towards harmony and peaceful co-existence.

I must express my gratitude to Ven. Weragoda Sarada Maha Nayaka Thero, Chief Prelate Singapore, for the substantial support he always provides to the Singapore Buddhist Meditation Centre, to enable this institution to spread the compassionate Teaching of the Buddha right round the world.

With Metta,

Koh Beng Tee
President,
The Singapore Buddhist Meditation Centre





THESE ARE THE STANZAS TO WORSHIP PARENTS

Mother

For protecting me within the womb
for ten months and for bringing me up well,
I worship the feet of my mother,
wishing her a life of a hundred years.

*Dasa māse urekatvā
Poseti vuddhi kāranam
Āyu dīgham vassa-satam
Mātu pādānāṃ namā maham*

Father

I worship the feet of my father who
kissed and caressed me and placed
me among kings with my
welfare at heart.

*Vuddhikāro ālingitvā
Chumbitvā piya puttakam
Rāja majjham supatittham
Pitu pādānāṃ namā maham*

I have no words to recount the suffering my father underwent,
on my behalf, from the day I was born, I worship you this way,
O my father, to expiate my sins.

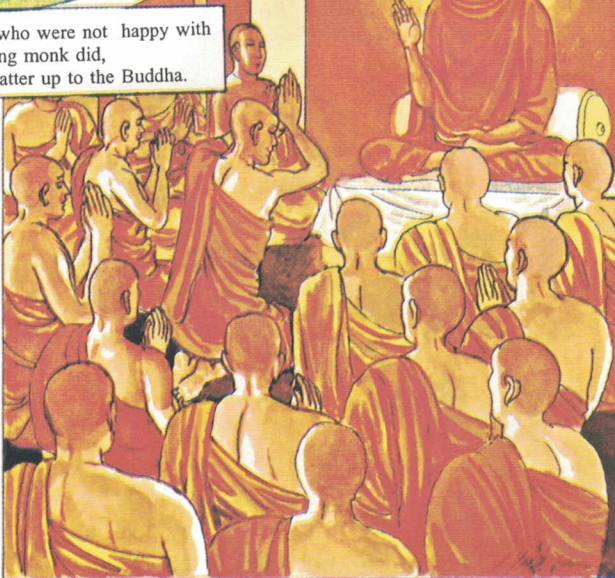
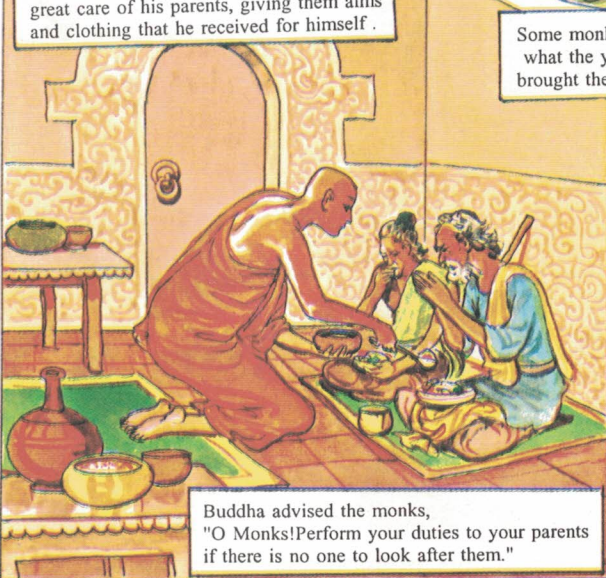
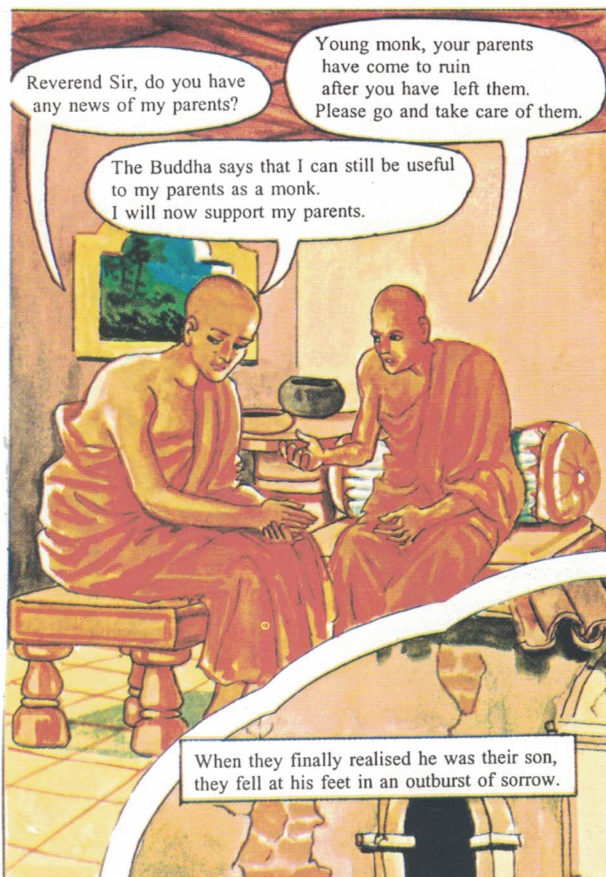
When I cried you lulled me to sleep, with love and affection.
You washed me and cleaned me; my father and mother,
may you attain ever-lasting bliss.

*"If a child lives with tolerance he learns to be patient.
If a child lives with encouragement he learns confidence.
If a child lives with praise he learns to appreciate.
If a child lives with fairness he learns justice.
If a child lives with security he learns to have faith.
If a child lives with approval he learns to like himself.
If a child lives with acceptance and
friendship he learns to find love in the world".*





Children should be trained to respect and love their parents, from their very early days on.
As the saying goes, "The parents are the Buddhas at home"



PARENTS AND CHILDREN - HARMONY THROUGH PERENNIAL WISDOM

The ties that bind parents to their children, and, in turn, children to their parents, are among the most sacred in human society. Among men, these bonds have evolved into sophisticated, well-structured patterns, out of a universally experienced natural urge.

In the animal kingdom, the inborn affection of parents towards their young and the love the young eagerly seek from their parents, always warm the hearts of human beings. The care that the mother-cat lavishes upon the litter of kittens, the dog-mother guarding her young pups with a ferocious sense of affection and aggressiveness, are instances most people are familiar with.

The cow and her calf typify the tenderness of parent-offspring links in the animal kingdom. Bird parents risk their lives several times a day in their concerned efforts to keep their nestlings adequately fed.

The elephant calf is protected and guarded jealously not only by its parents but by the total herd. It is as if the whole elephant community is bound by a naturally-occurring convention to safeguard the young in their midst.

The affection of the parents towards their young is touchingly displayed in the pack of monkeys. How the monkey-mother carries her young one, is evocative of the practice of human mothers. In the world of beasts and birds, the parent-offspring attachment is endlessly repeated. Its variations are equally profuse.

Change

But in human society, this natural cycle of parental affection towards their children and the reciprocation of that love by the children towards their parents, has undergone

considerable change. This is due, to a great extent, to the transformation of modern man's lifestyle, the world over. Human society is now moving towards rapid urbanization. The cultural values and standards of behaviour of the earlier ages are no longer tenable - even when they are still valid, the original sense of urgency does not prevail any longer.

In the sprawling urban settlements of the modern world, the "family" has turned out to be an endangered entity. Everywhere, family members tend to drift apart. The individual need takes precedence over family obligation.

In most areas of modern society, parent-child affection has been reduced to a mere routine relationship. In such impersonal links, the "heart" is not very much present.

United Nations

The world is becoming increasingly aware of this alarming development. In order to counter this human deterioration, the UN declared the year 1994 as the "International Year of the Family." The central purpose of this move initiated by the World Body, is to bring back to the global community, those natural affections that keep parents and children together in a harmonious integration.

When the hold of the family diminishes, and the strength of family ties wanes, generations of young people begin to grope aimlessly. This situation, in turn, breeds violence, social disorders, deviations from wholesome norms and generally, an increasing sense of hopelessness.

Criminality, addiction to drugs, vandalism, disregard for elders, disaffection with relatives, lack



of respect for men of religion, inability to sustain conventional human relationships, and even the failure of such wholesome basic sentiments as kindness, sympathy for those who are suffering, desire to cooperate and fellow-feeling are all the direct outcome of the erosion of strong families and wholesome parent-child relations. As the global outcome of all this, we find that in most theatres of human existence, children are in crisis. Today's media are filled with bizarre stories of juvenile misdeeds. The world was shocked by the news of the two British boys, luring and killing a two-year old boy in a disgustingly grotesque manner. In the US, a "gangster" of just 11 years was murdered by two members of his own gang. The two killers were brothers - one 16 and the other 14.

Violence

The recent history of Rwanda in Africa recorded the world's worst massacre that resulted in the most extensive exodus of refugees the world has known so far.

In some societies, this deterioration of relations between parents and children may be more pronounced than in others. But in almost all societies, the disruption in proper communication between parents and children, is beginning to be felt. Forces are at work to break asunder the wholesome ties between parents and children. In such a context, it is crucially important to pose the questions "How can harmony be restored to the bonds between parents and children?" "In what way can the natural and healthy accord between parents and children be brought back to modern communities?"

To be able to answer such a question adequately, we must first examine why and how these affections dwindled - and at what point in this modern age. The disregard of some parents for their children and its inevitable outcome - the lack of concern on the part of children for the well-being of the parents, began to creep into

modern communities when their way of life started to be dominated by the greedy pursuit of material acquisitions.

Obligations

The sole goal that is relentlessly targeted on by most, is worldly success. Caught up in this race they have little time for spiritual values or human considerations. These material pursuits do not, in any way, provide lasting satisfaction. Such lusts are insatiable and are therefore incapable of providing lasting happiness. Men caught up in this nexus lose their sense of humanity. Held in such a vice, parents will forget their duty by their children. And, the children themselves will neglect their human and natural obligations towards their parents.

To awaken the moderns from this gruesome nightmare, we have to turn to the perennial wisdom enshrined in ancient religions and philosophical systems. We have to embark on a journey to rediscover these lost human values. How can the moderns find again that genuine, unswerving, selfless love parents should have for their children? In what way can we bring the children of our time to cherish those human dimensions of love and affection for their parents - of being dedicated to the welfare of parents when they have reached helpless old age, after spending their youth, vigour and faculties to bring up their children into healthy adulthood? How can we teach the children to savour the pure joy and high pleasure of seeing their parents happy when the darkening shadows begin to engulf those parents in the deepening evening of life?

Here, we will begin to look at the wisdom of ancients to guide us in our effort to restore harmony to the relations between parents and children. And, without any doubt whatsoever, it is this harmony that will ensure a world of happiness and peace devoid of those harsh notes that sour human relations.

THE PARENTS - BUDDHA'S VIEW

The Buddha, in His Supreme Wisdom, identified four fields suitable for meritorious action. According to the Buddha, the four fields of merit are honouring:

1. The Buddha,
2. Arahants (Saints),
3. Mother, and
4. Father.

The Buddhas (Supremely Enlightened Beings) are the flowers of the human race. Their arising in this world is very rare indeed. It is only in such an era of a Buddha, that saintly disciples flourish in all their spiritual vigour.

But, a kind mother and loving father are present in every home. For dutiful and grateful children, these parents are always available as accessible fields of merit.

What little is sown with care in these fields will yield a bountiful harvest. Those fortunate sons and daughters who are blessed with the presence of their parents are lucky, because those children can bestow their unfailing love and overflowing gratitude on their parents.

Debt

The Buddha says that children are so deeply indebted to their parents that they cannot sufficiently show their gratitude to them.

Even if the children were to carry their mother on the right shoulder and the father on the left, fulfilling all their needs for a period of hundred years, they cannot still compensate for the debt they owe their parents.

Even if the children have the power to place their parents on a heap of jewels and to bestow on them the sovereignty of the whole universe, they cannot still repay the debt they owe their parents. Hindu scriptures, too have, established the exalted value of parents. Hindu religious works say that one religious teacher is worth ten secular teachers, one father is worth one hundred religious teachers, but one mother is worth a thousand fathers.

It is quite clear why these ancient religious teachers and secular teachers praised the parents so highly. It is quite easy to find reasons for this view.

Kind-hearted fathers give their best to their children. They forget their own personal happiness and look after the comfort and the needs of their children.

Education

Parents lavishly spend their hard-earned wealth on the education of their children. If the children fail here, it will be a great disappointment to the parents. The only pleasure of the parents is to see that their children prosper, and live in happiness and peace.

Dear mothers at times risk their very life and their precious life in the prime of their youth and in the best years of their womanhood, even though they have not seen the face of their innocent, unborn child. The mothers feed their children, turning their own blood into milk.

To see to the comfort of their children, they spend restless nights - at times, months on end. They undergo untold sufferings to nurse and

bring up their children. Children are part and parcel of their being. They are their true wealth, invaluable treasure. To the parents, children are their main source of delight and happiness.

Children give their life a meaning

Do children have no way at all to repay the great debt they owe their parents? Yes, there is. They can repay their debt by persuading them to do good. They can also repay their debt to their parents by conducting their life as ideal children.

Children should provide their parents not only worldly goods which last only for a short while. Parents should be given substantial spiritual treasures too, in addition to material pleasures.

All children must really understand that their parents are the greatest possession they have in the world.

They must respect them each day in their lives. In spite of the fact that he was the ruler of the land, King Agbo of ancient Sri Lanka, never forgot to look after his mother personally. He would attend to all her needs, although he had pressing state duties to take care of.

Blessing

Children must respect the wishes of their parents. They must never hurt their feelings. Children must always be a blessing to their parents and not a curse.

Children have a duty to protect and maintain the honour of their parents. This can be achieved through their good breeding, their refined manners and noble behaviour.

The character-traits of the children should bear testimony to the fact that they are the worthy children of their worthy parents.

The children should take care not to do anything that will discredit their parents. Even after the parents have passed away, it is the duty of children to see that they do not behave in a manner that will be a blemish, even slightly, to the good name of their departed parents.

Parents' love for their children

It is difficult to quantify the love parents have for their children. It is rarely that children begin to value the amount of love, affection and care the parents lavish upon them limitlessly. It is equally difficult for most children to appreciate how self-sacrificing their parents are in their affection towards them.

Generally, the love parents have for their children is far greater than the affection of the children towards their parents.

This is partly because the children are not mature enough to understand the quality of parental love in full measure.

Children will begin to understand the real nature of the affection parents have for them, only when they grow up and have children of their own.

Parents can understand the need of children because they too were children once. It is this that makes parents have a sympathy towards their children.

Even when the children err parents are always ready to forget and forgive the mistakes made by their children. Children may hurt the feelings of their parents-knowingly or unknowingly. Children may even be ungrateful to their parents sometime. But, the parents forgive them. Children are likely to disappoint their parents due to their ignorance and impatience. Children may disobey their parents and follow a course of action totally different from what the parents expect of them. Even in such instances, the parents, generally forgive them. Whatever the shortcomings of the children, when they are in want and in adversity, the parents come to their rescue.

Kind and benevolent parents behave that way towards their children. But, on most occasions, the children find it difficult to understand their parents. This is because they have not been able to understand problems of parenthood and the real love parents have for their children. But, the children must always try to understand the love the parents have for them. If this does not happen they will regret. The story of Ajatasattu is a case in point, though it is quite an extreme instance.



THE PRESSURE AND PLEASURE OF BRINGING UP CHILDREN

If we have not expressed our gratitude to others for their services, how can we expect our children to show their gratitude to us?

The family is the oldest social unit in this world. It is, in fact, a society in miniature. And it is the duty of each generation to pass on the torch of civilization to the next.

Most parents love and cherish their children. There is no sacrifice a loving parent is not prepared to make for the well-being and happiness of his children. Unfortunately, modern materialistic influences and pressures have now made the burden of parenthood greater than before. It even threatens to tear the family apart, the most fundamental social structure which had been formed by the human race before the dawn of civilization.

Pressure on Parents

There are many causes for this. First of all, the economic pattern during the last two hundred years has changed drastically from agriculture to industry. No longer does the family operate as an economic unit on the farm. The parents work away from their children who are generally referred to as 'latch-key' children and only return home after office hours. The nature of their work requires them to be time conscious and they are rewarded according to their work performance. During a time of recession, they are exposed to the insecurity of either being laid off or getting a reduction in pay.

Children are exposed to a wide range of expectations, consumption patterns and demands by their peers in school or other activities featured in

advertisements through the mass media which parents are being pressured to meet. In addition, parents are sometimes evaluated by critical children who are better educated than themselves. They may not even have very much in common with their children to strike a simple conversation. This rift between parents and children is known as the generation gap.

These changes place great pressure on parents, many of whom seem unable to cope with the psychological demands. Besides all these, the two world wars of this century have created frightening experiences which many have gone through and which have caused whole nations to change their views about a benevolent God who cares for all the creatures he made. In this age of science and technology, such concepts propagated by many religions have been found to contradict mankind's own experiences and modern scientific discoveries.

Pressure on Children

Most parents have their worldly expectations and will feel a sense of failure or inadequacy if their children do not live up to them. Great emphasis is placed on materialistic attainment and scoring points before their friends and neighbours, while spiritual values are sadly neglected. Unfortunately, their children fall victim to these psychological pressures. They are encouraged to excel in their studies, to secure jobs that pay well, to climb up the social ladder, and to accumulate as much wealth as possible. Many parents do not place too much value on virtues such as gratitude, honesty, integrity, kindness, consideration and tolerance. The pursuit of wealth and worldly success are far more important to them.



Due to such social pressures, parents, either rightly or wrongly, and without thinking of the consequences, encourage and even force their children to work hard and compete for the so-called 'success'. They impose their value systems on their children who are under pressure to be smart, to be popular and to excel. They are under the impression that success means ability to compete, conquer and quell opposition, ignoring the need to establish an inner harmony with oneself.

Whether the children have the interest or not, they are expected to attend classes on computers, music, ballet, swimming, and so on, under the misguided belief that such activities are very important for success and happiness. There is nothing wrong in pursuing such healthy activities if the children are interested, have the required talents, or if they are meant to enrich their child's awareness of themselves and the world around. The cultural activities and accomplishments are necessary to make human beings more cultured. A richer understanding of the beauty of life should help children become more understanding, more compassionate, and more appreciative of the beauty of nature around them.

It is natural for parents to see their own features and characteristics reflected in their children.

My beauty and your brain. George Bernard Shaw was once approached by a seductive young actress who cooed him in his ear: "Wouldn't it be wonderful if we got married and had a child with my beauty and your brains?" George Bernard Shaw who was hardly a handsome man replied: "My dear, that would be wonderful indeed, but what if our child had my beauty and your brains?" The actress who did not need much persuasion just sped off. It is important to differentiate between what is necessary and what is not. Success and happiness do not lie in mastering such accomplishments alone. Parents should not place the children under such pressure - to be brilliant beyond their capabilities, to be leaders when they are not ready for leadership, or to be star athletes when they have no sporting attributes. As a result of unrealistic goals, children are prematurely forced into a world of adult pressures and responsibilities. The outcome: they are always tired and listless. They are not able to enjoy the carefree life of childhood. These pressures have also the undesirable consequence of giving rise to emotional insecurity in their adulthood. Let us not transfer our ambitions to them and rob them of their childhood.

Recognizing Potentials

A parent should be aware of the potential within his child - of what he can accomplish in the future in his own way and in his own good time. Children are not mature enough to plan for the distant future. You cannot expect a primary school student to set his sights on going to university, deciding his career, or his marriage. But one thing is certain. There is no such thing as a 'useless child.' Every human being has some talent, some potential. An academically 'stupid' child may be born 'natural' in motor mechanics or cooking. It is, therefore, the duty of parents to recognize what a child is good in, his aptitudes, to pay particular attention to such gifts or talents, and encourage the child to develop them for the good of society and the child's sense of fulfilment. Try to train the children according to their mentality to do something which they can do for their living. If teachers and parents try to understand the mental capacity, the intrinsic mental habits and the potential talents of their children, there will be no difficulty in training them to be good citizens.

Parents must evaluate their priorities. It has become fashionable for parents to compare the academic achievements of their children with other parents. By all means encourage the child to excel in his studies, but a child should not be evaluated only on the basis of his academic achievement. We must accept him for what he is, and not what we expect him to be. Yet, this is what all parents are unconsciously guilty of. All this does not mean parents should allow their children to grow up without training or to aim for excellence. They should be encouraged to excel, after taking into account their aptitudes, inclinations, and abilities. Human beings are not all born equal, so parents must recognize their children's potentials and help them to excel in those areas in which their potential is strong.

Parents should try to recognize the natural ability of their children instead of imposing their ideas on them. Not all children are born to be engineers and doctors. Yet, when given every encouragement and support, their aptitudes will develop and they grow to their fullest potential.

Child prodigy. Once a boy who was gifted in poetry was born into a poor family. He would spontaneously speak in verses even when conversing with others. His talent impressed many people but not his father, who being uneducated, was not able to appreciate his son's talent. One day

when his son replied to him in poetry, he became very angry and started beating the boy. While he was being caned, he replied to his father in poetry.

*'Dear father, please, Cane me if you must;
But poetry is the gift I was born with,
It's a gift I did not ask for, nor is it one that I could lose;
Allow me, dear father, to use it at least.'*

Parents should ensure that their children be given a good education, and also be equipped with a strong ethical and moral code of conduct. It is only with good ethical and spiritual training that a child can grow to realize his true potential. Francis Story, the learned Buddhist writer, says:

*"Knowledge is needed for success in the world,
Meditation is needed to realize Nibbanic bliss;
Sila (morality) is necessary for both."*

Parents have to teach and guide their children not only by precept but also by example. Teach them how to fulfill their duties and responsibilities and to show their gratitude to elders and parents. It is by example that children learn and remember best.

There are some narrow minded parents who commit certain immoral things and use vulgar words at home.

Parents must take special care when they are going to do something in the presence of their children.

Many carefree parents allow their children to behave as they wish without imparting them any moral guidance. It is questionable whether parents can succeed in teaching their children after they reach adulthood when it is too late. Instead of day-dreaming all the day long positive action should be given in teaching them love, respect, harmony and, above all, to be citizens of the world.

There are cases where parents have given their best to educate their children and teach them good values, but these efforts have all been thrown to the wind due to the stubborn and rebellious nature of their children. There are some incorrigible children, born to the best of parents. In such an event, parents need not be remorseful as they have

already done their parental duties expected of them. Parents should develop an understanding to change what they can and to accept what they cannot.

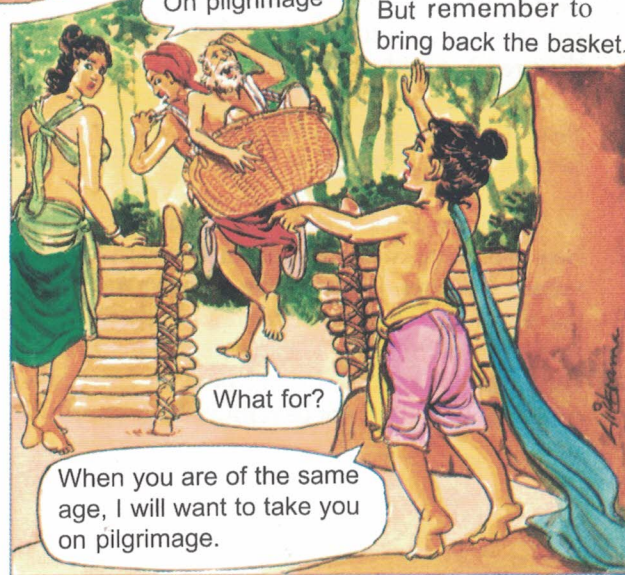
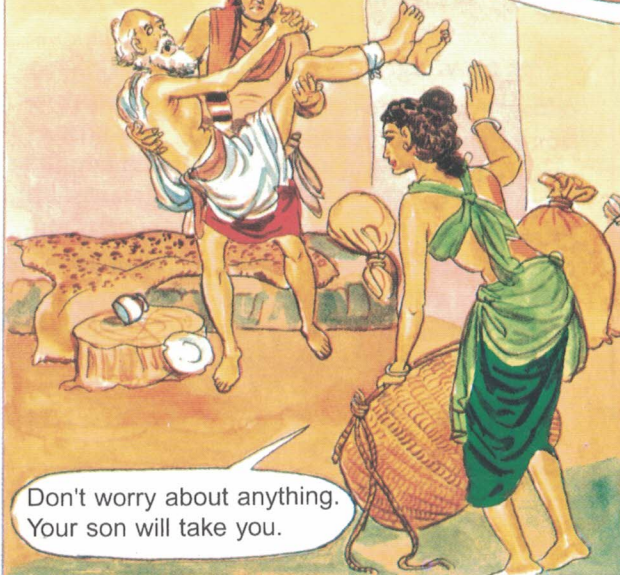
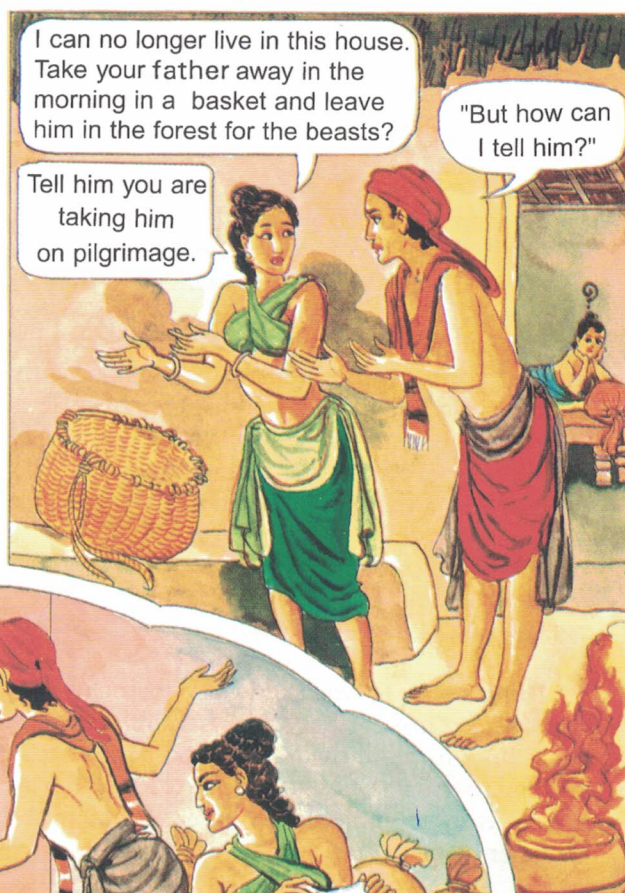
The Buddha had the same thing said in the Dhammapada. A person with limited wisdom may think that his children and wealth belong to him. But even he himself is not his own, what more to speak of children and wealth. How can he believe that he owns them when he cannot control or prevent the changes that his children and wealth will have to undergo.

Some parents place demands on their married children, who have their own problems, and are themselves under tremendous pressure in society. When parents complain about their children's ingratitude it only succeeds in keeping them away due to guilt and shame. But if parents develop the virtue of equanimity, they will remain calm and not make undue demands on their children. This will bring a greater sense of closeness and understanding between parents and children and create the desired oneness in the family.

Parents in Modern Society

One of the saddest things about modern society is the lack of parental love which children in highly industrialized countries suffer from. When a couple gets married, they usually plan to have a number of children. And once the child is born, parents are morally obliged to care for him to the best of their ability. Parents are responsible to see that a child is not only satisfied materially; the spiritual and psychological aspects are very important too.

The provision of material comfort is of secondary importance when compared to the provision of parental love and attention. We know of many parents from the not-so-well-to-do families who have brought up their children well with plenty of love. On the other hand, many rich families have provided every material comfort for their children but have deprived them of parental love. Such children will grow up devoid of any psychological and moral development.



GRANDFATHER IN A BASKET

There is an Asian folk-tale which has, as its central theme, the cruelty of a son towards his father.

According to this story once there lived a young couple. Their only child - a boy - was 9. The father of the young husband lived in their house. This parent was old and decrepit and age had shrunk him into a helpless cripple. The young wife resented his presence in the house. But, her husband - the son of the old man - always managed to pacify her. One night, the young wife waited until their son went to bed and ordered the husband to get rid of his father, if he wanted to continue living with her. The husband was helpless. He had to agree to his wife's proposal as he was determined that his family life should go on uninterrupted. Assuming that their young son was fast asleep, the couple plotted how they should get rid of the old father. The wife said, "Early in the morning, you must tell father that you are taking him on pilgrimage. Put him in a large basket and take him into the thick jungle. Leave him there to the beasts and get back home." The young son was lying awake and overheard what was being said.

Early next morning, the young son was up. As planned, the husband put his father in the basket and was about to set out. The son asked, "Father, where are you taking my grandfather?"

"My son, I am taking him on pilgrimage."

"All right. But, remember to bring back the basket as I will want to use it to take you on pilgrimage when you are of grandfather's age."

It was the moment of truth for the young couple. They changed their mind and continued to keep the old man in their house.

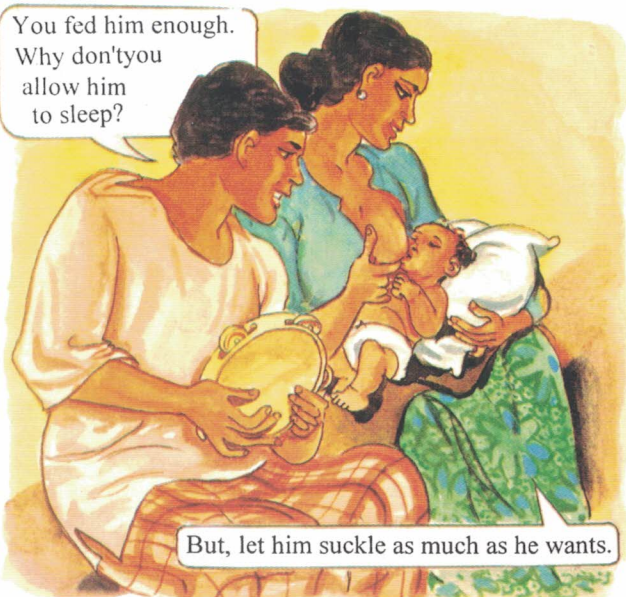
The story packs a sharp and biting moral.

In ancient India there are several stories of this type. In those, too, the central theme is the disaffection of the children toward their parents and the corrective imposed by the grandchildren. According to another story of this type, the young father plans to take away his old father in a cart. He was taking him to a cemetery. The grandson went along too. When the grandson found that his father was digging a grave to put the grandfather in, the young fellow told his father "Please dig another grave now itself. When you are old I will be able to put you in without troubling myself to dig another grave." Of course, this deterred the young father. The moral of these stories is that what you do to your old parents will in turn be done to you by your own children.

In yet another story, the grandfather is being given food in a dirty old plate, placed on the ground. The plate was so dirty that one could not even touch it not to say anything about eating out of it. When the old man's son found that it could no longer be used to feed his father, he tried to throw it away. His young son intervened and said, "Please do not throw that old plate away. I want to keep it." Father asked "What for?" The young son replied, "Why of course to give you food in, when you are of the same age as my grandfather." This taught the young father the need to be affectionate to his old parents.



You fed him enough.
Why don't you
allow him
to sleep?



But, let him suckle as much as he wants.

Bless you, my son.

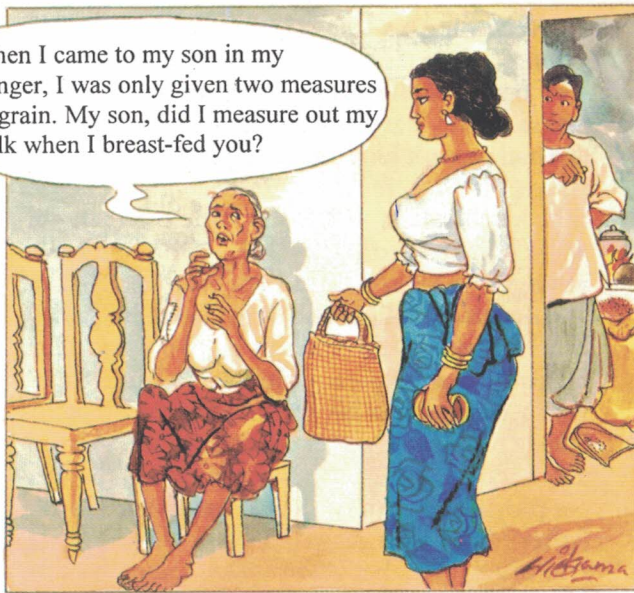


Shall I go to our son for help?

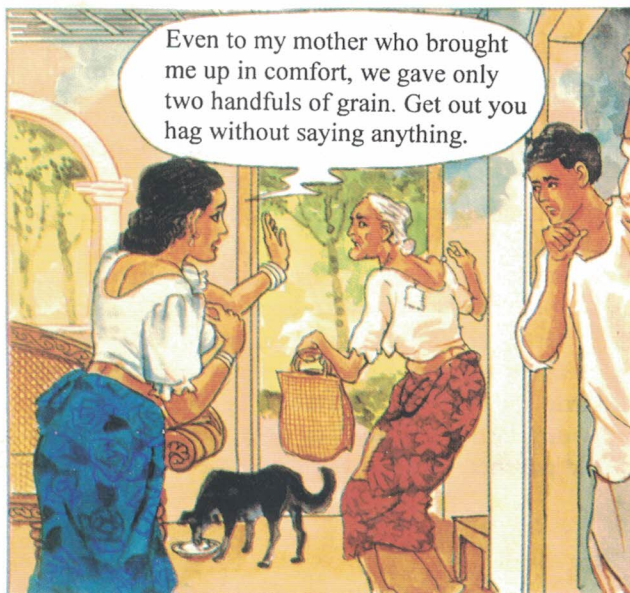
No. Why should we trouble him?



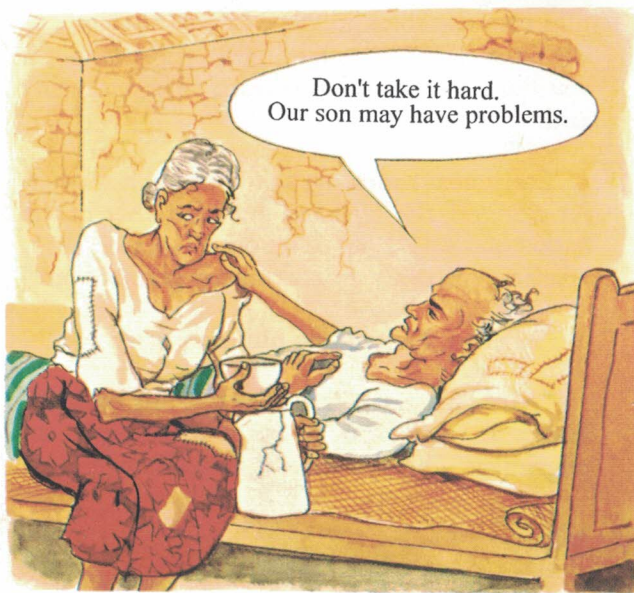
When I came to my son in my
hunger, I was only given two measures
of grain. My son, did I measure out my
milk when I breast-fed you?



Even to my mother who brought
me up in comfort, we gave only
two handfuls of grain. Get out you
hag without saying anything.



Don't take it hard.
Our son may have problems.



DID I MEASURE OUT THE MILK WHEN I BREAST-FED YOU?

In the folk-tales and folk-poems of mankind there are numerous references to affection and disaffection between parents and children. There is hardly any community in the world that does not possess some stories of folk-origin relating to these parent-children links. Some of these stories and poems are extremely moving. Therefore they have a capacity to awaken the love people naturally possess towards their parents. Even hard-hearted people may be tempted to shed a tear when they listen to such folk-poems and folk-tales.

The story that has been illustrated on the opposite page derives from a folk-poem popular in Sri Lanka. The original version is a four line stanza which can be recited to move people into pity. There is something of a vague story line in this poem. It can be recounted this way.

Once upon a time, there lived a mother who struggled hard to bring up her child. After such a struggle, the old mother was able to bring up her son to lead a successful life. The son eventually got married. He and his wife set up their own home. There is hardly anyone to look after the old mother. But she manages to get along with difficulty.

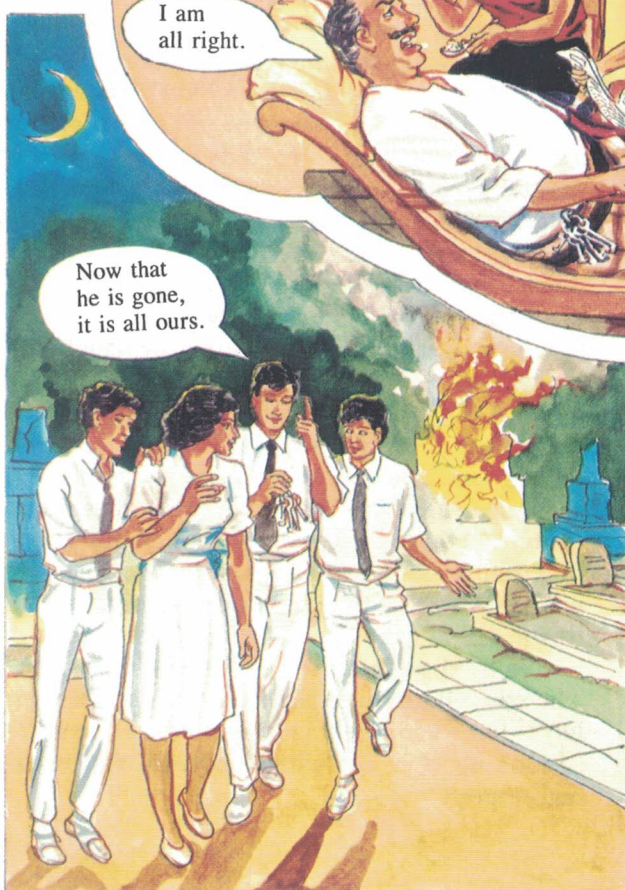
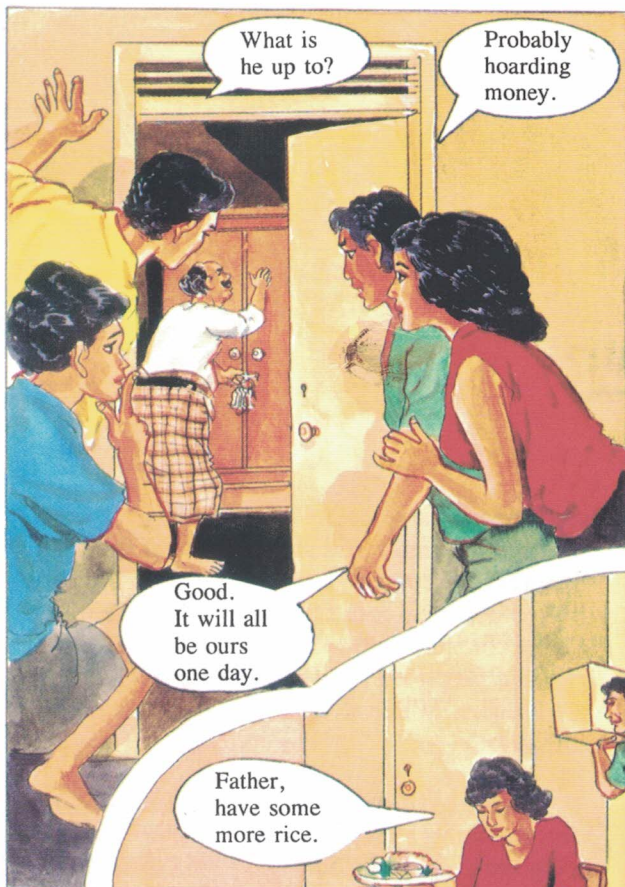
One day she feels that she needed the help of the son. She is unbearably hungry with no food at home. Although she is not too inclined, she has to go to her son to ask for food. The son sees the mother coming from a distance. He stays inside the house and sends his wife to meet her.

At the door the mother tells her daughter-in-law that she is hungry and is in need of food. The daughter-in-law goes inside the house and brings a bag. She gives it to the mother and puts

two measures of grain into the bag. But the mother is hungry and she cannot eat the grain. She has to prepare it, because the grain has to be hoked before it could be boiled and eaten. It is a time consuming process. What she needs here is some prepared food to appease her immediate hunger. When she gets the grain she is quite unhappy.

In spite of the fact that the son does not come out, she knows that these two measures of grain were sent to her by her son. This disturbs her immensely. According to the folk-story, she recites a poem when she receives the grain. The following is the meaning of the poem she recited. "I came to the door of my son's house, as I was quite hungry and famished. But I was given only two measures of grain. I was in half a mind whether I should accept this or not. O my son, did I measure out the milk when I breast-fed you?" The story goes that the daughter-in-law was very much angered by the attitude of her mother-in-law. She recited a poem of her own. The following is the significance of what the daughter-in-law said. "My own mother brought me up without allowing me to suffer even a little. And even when she came, we gave her only a handful of grain. You have been given two measures of grain and yet you have started saying things about it. You old hag, you get out of this place this minute." The son does not seem to have intervened in this exchange but even today when this poem is recited people feel tremendously moved by the plight of the helpless old mother. The story underlines the need for children to look after their parents not merely for the sake of looking after but wholeheartedly and with real respect.





THE MAN WHO HOARDED WEALTH

Once upon a time, there lived a family of six. The six members of the family were father, mother, three sons and one daughter. The mother passed away due to a sudden illness. After the mother was gone, the father dominated the household. He looked after the children until they were healthy grownups and the father spent all his money to educate them. When they were adults the four children were quite keen to obtain their share of the paternal wealth. But they never probed this issue with their father.

They were quite certain that their father had been hoarding wealth.

They had seen the father going into a room quite frequently. He was in the habit of spending some time in that room. He would never allow any of his children to enter it. When he was working inside the room, the children could hear various noises. They thought, he was counting money and hoarding wealth.

He always had the key to that room. He would take it along wherever he went. Therefore, the children were not able to see what was inside the room.

The children tried hard to please their father. They fulfilled his every wish, hoping to get his wealth that way.

As time went on, the father took ill. Even in sick-bed, he had the keys of the room on his person. He never gave those to any of his children.

His illness worsened and he passed away. The children dutifully performed the funeral rites. They assembled at home after the funeral was over.

At last they were all ready to see the wealth that their father had hoarded in the secret room.

One of the sons opened the door and went in. Others soon followed him in. There was a large wooden almirah (wardrobe) inside the room. They selected the keys to this and opened it. They were quite keen to discover the wealth, they thought, was hoarded in it. But, when they opened the wardrobe what they saw shocked them.

The wardrobe was full of bricks - only bricks.

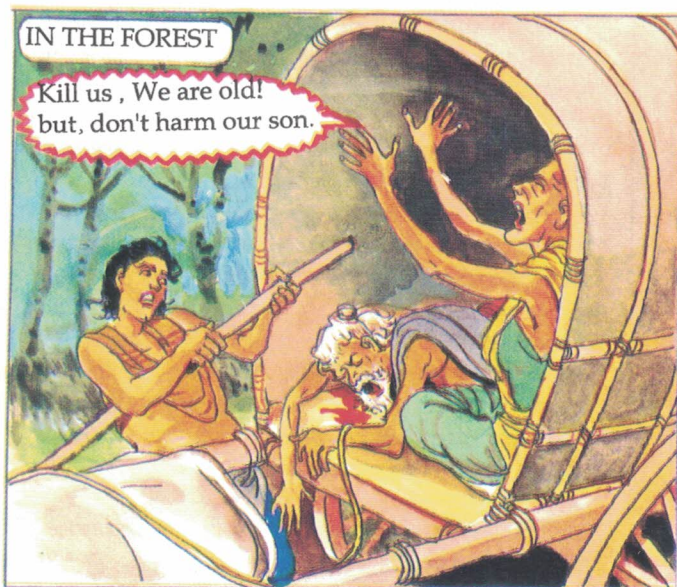
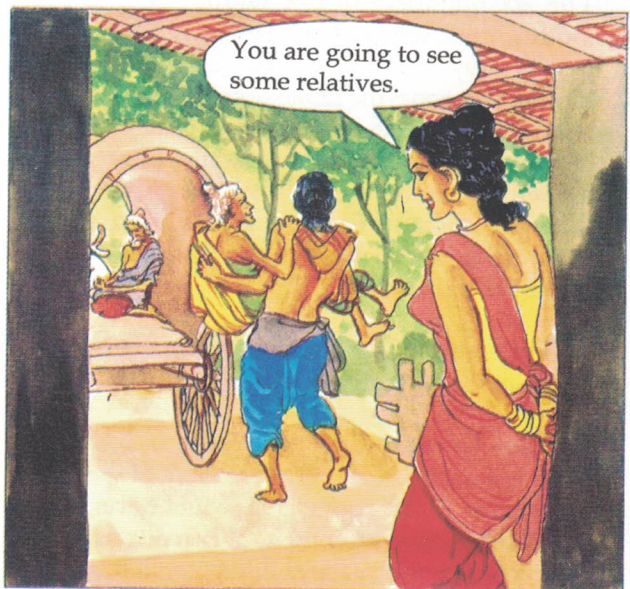
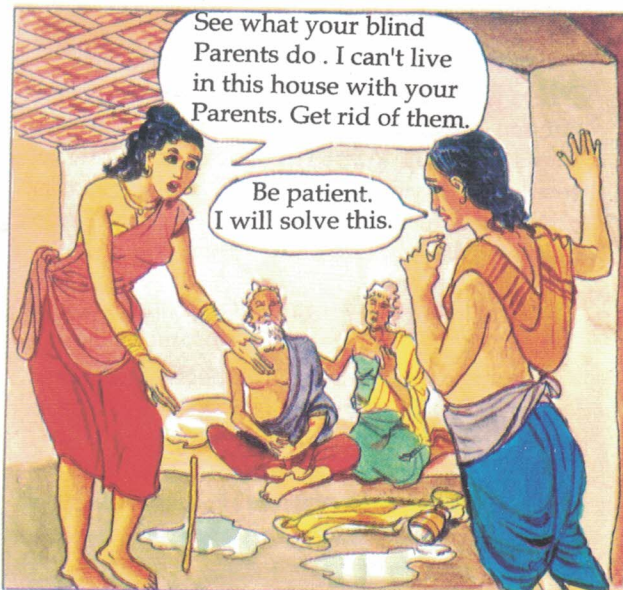
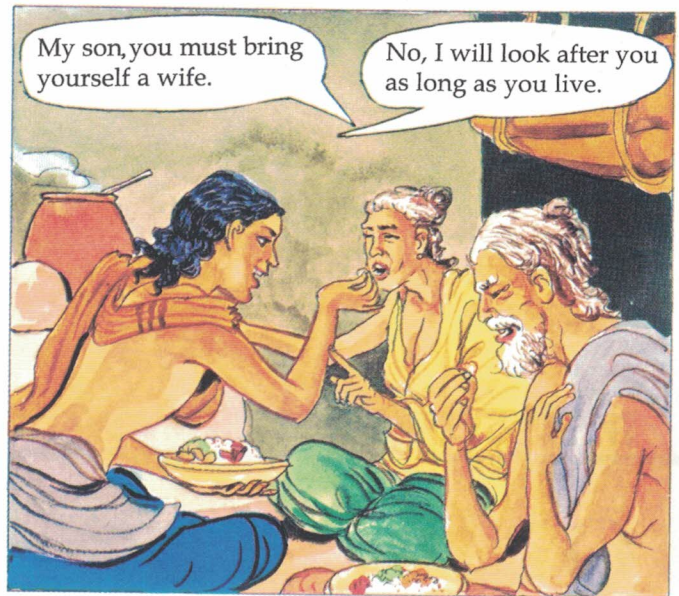
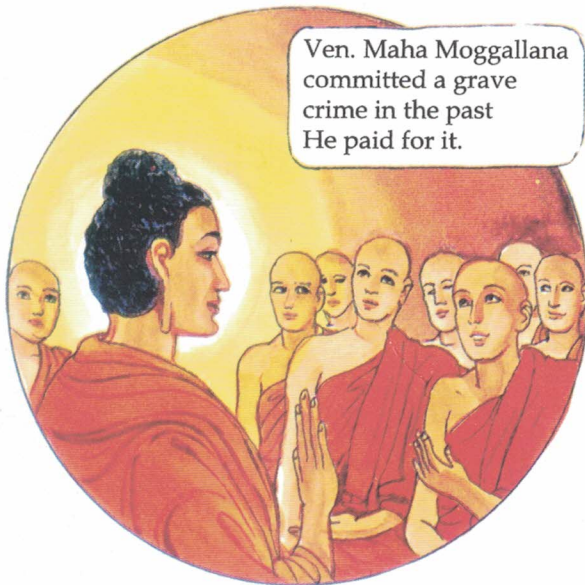
The greedy children had the shock of their lives. Their father had taught them a lesson for attending to him only with his wealth in mind.

The moral of the story is that children should look after their parents not because of their wealth but because they gave them life and being.

When children look after their parents through genuine love and affection, without expecting any reward, that relationship is holy and sacred.

In most instances rich parents do not seem to receive the genuine affection of their children. The children show their love toward their affluent parents in terms of money and material wealth they can get from their parents. In their old age this is truly a worrisome issue for these parents. In their youth they took a great amount of trouble to earn their wealth and also to bring up their children but now the children are worried and troubled not about being grateful to the parents but about how soon and how much they can get out of their aging parents.

The present story shows graphically how the need for wealth makes children forget love.



THE MAN WHO KILLED HIS PARENTS

This is a story that occurs in the Buddhist scripture. Venerable Moggallana the Great was one of the two chief disciples of the Buddha. In spite of his high spiritual attainments and psychic powers, he was caught hold of by bandits and beaten to death.

Explaining the cause of this tragic event, the Buddha traced this to an incident in one of Venerable Moggallana's past births.

Once upon a time in the distant past, a certain youth of good family performed with his own hands all of the household duties, such as pounding rice and cooking, and taking care of his mother and father. They said to him, "Son, you are wearing yourself out by performing all of the work both in the house and in the forest. We will fetch you home a certain young woman to be your wife." The son replied, "Dear mother and father, there is no necessity for anything of the sort. So long as you both shall live I will wait upon you with my own hands." In spite of the fact that he refused to listen to their suggestion, they repeated their request time and again, and finally brought him home a young woman to be his wife.

For a few days only she waited upon his mother and father. After those few days had passed, she was unable even to bear the sight of them and said to her husband with a great show of indignation, "It is impossible for me to live any longer in the same house with your mother and father." But he paid no attention to what she said. So one day, when he was out of the house, she took bits of clay and bark and scum of rice-gruel and scattered them here and there about the house. When her husband returned and asked her what it meant, she said, "This is what your blind old parents have done; they go about littering up the entire house; it is impossible for me to live in the same place with them any longer." Thus did she speak again

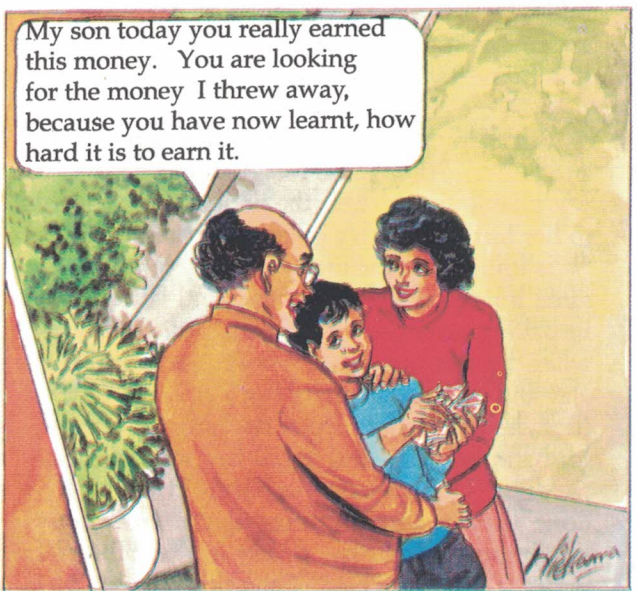
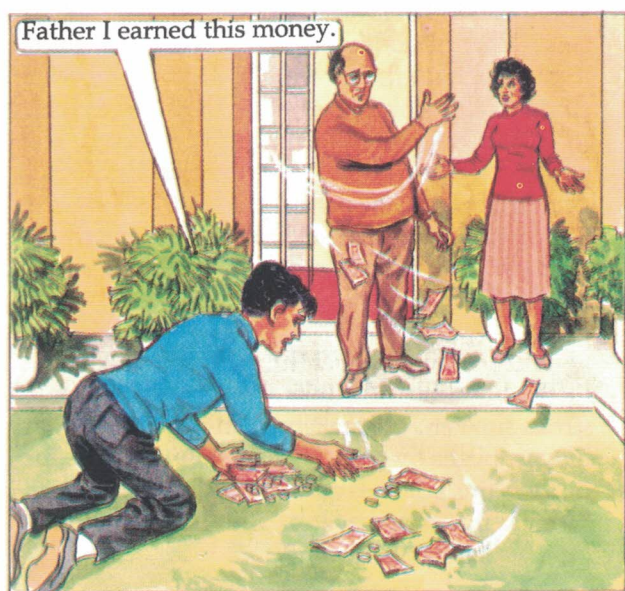
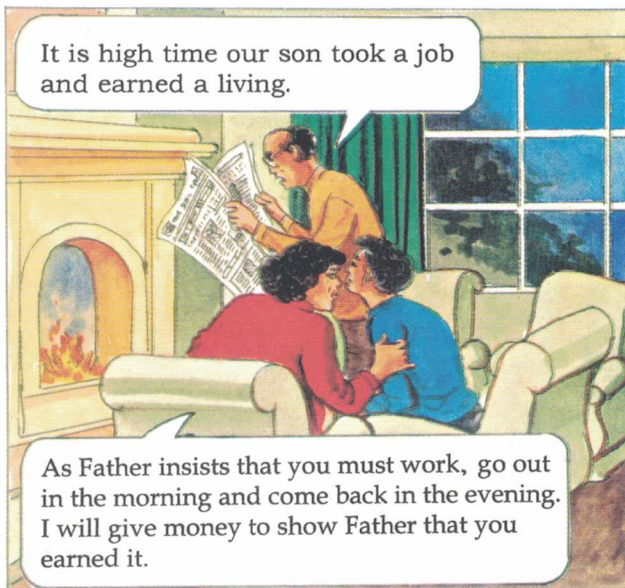
and again. The result was that finally even a being so distinguished as he, a being who had fulfilled the Perfections, broke with his mother and father.

"Never mind," said the husband, "I shall find some way of dealing with them properly." So when he had given them food, he said to them, "Dear mother and father, in such and such a place live kinsfolk of yours who desire you to visit them; let us go there." And, assisting them to enter a carriage, he set out with them. When he reached the depths of the forest, he said to his father, "Dear father, hold these reins; the oxen know the track so well that they will go without guidance; this is a place where thieves lie in wait for travellers. I am going to descend from the carriage." And giving the reins into the hands of his father, he descended from the carriage and made his way into the forest.

As he did so, he began to make a noise, increasing the volume of the noise until it sounded as if a band of thieves was about to make an attack. When his mother and father heard the noise, they thought to themselves, "A band of thieves is about to attack us." Therefore they said to their son, "Son, we are old people; save yourself, and pay no attention to us." But even as his mother and father cried out thus, the son, yelling the thieves' yell, beat them and killed them and threw their bodies into the forest. Having done so, he returned home.

After relating this past story, the Buddha spoke to the bhikkhus. "Monks, because of the monstrous sin Ven. Moggallana committed in one of his past births by destroying his blind parents, he came to this grievous end. This is his last birth in Samsara but even as a great saint he could not escape his kamma - result."





THE SON WHO DID NOT WORK

Once upon a time, there lived a middle-aged couple. They had an only child - a son. He was about seventeen and the parents doted upon him. But, the father was keen that the son should grow up into an independent person, earning his own living.

The father kept on saying that the son should take a job. He insisted that he should learn the art of earning an independent living, without depending on the parents all the time.

Though the father felt that way, the mother had other views. She did not quite like the idea of their son going out into the world struggling to earn a living. She would rather have him at home all the time. Still, because the father kept on saying that he should earn a living, she spoke to the son.

She said: "My son, as your father is keen to see you take a job, I have decided upon a plan. You go out of the house in the morning and come back home in the evening when people return home after work. I will give you money each evening when you come back. Give it to your father saying that it is the money you earned."

The son agreed. On the first day after returning home in the evening he gave to his father the money he received from his mother saying, "Father, this is the money I earned."

The father took the money and, without saying a word, threw it away. The mother, who was looking on, picked up the money thrown away by the father. The son did it the next day too. The father threw away money each time the son gave it to him.

After several days of this, the son said to his mother "Mother, this wouldn't do. I must really find some job." The mother gave her approval.

The next day, the son went out and found a job with great difficulty. He worked hard and in the evening he was given his wages. He brought the money home and gave it to father as usual, saying, "Father, this is the money I earned." The father threw away the money just as on previous days. This time, the son went down on all fours to pick up the money thrown away by father.

The father, who was observing the situation, hugged the son. He said, "My son, today you have really earned the money. That is why you picked it up with a great effort. You now know how hard it is to earn a living."

The moral here is that parents must give the children affection, and at the same time must teach them how hard it is to survive in the struggle to earn a living.

By nature parents have a great affection for their children but this must not make them overlook the realities of life. The children of course need the affection of their parents. It is equally important for them to be able to survive in the society in which parents are not always present to help them out when they confront crises. Along with affection parents must teach their children the way they should live wholesome independent lives.





MOTHER WHO MISLED SON

Once upon a time, there lived a widow with her only child —a son. The mother loved the son immensely. The son was free to go anywhere he wanted and to do whatever he liked. The mother would not restrain him, whatever he did.

This young son got into the habit of roaming about even at night. As time passed the young son grew into a sturdy youth, but acquired no skills to earn a living. Therefore, he started a career of stealing. At first, he was happy with petty thefts.

When he brought stolen goods home the mother accepted them gladly. She would treat the son sumptuously, encouraging him to continue his career of crime.

Eventually, he became a notorious thief. Officers of law were out to get him. But, undaunted, he went on with his unlawful activities. At last, he was captured and brought before the king. After questioning, the king found him guilty and ordered his execution.

Just before the execution, he told the king's men that he had a last wish to see his mother. As it was his last wish, the mother was brought to see him. The thief embraced the mother, and bit off her ear.

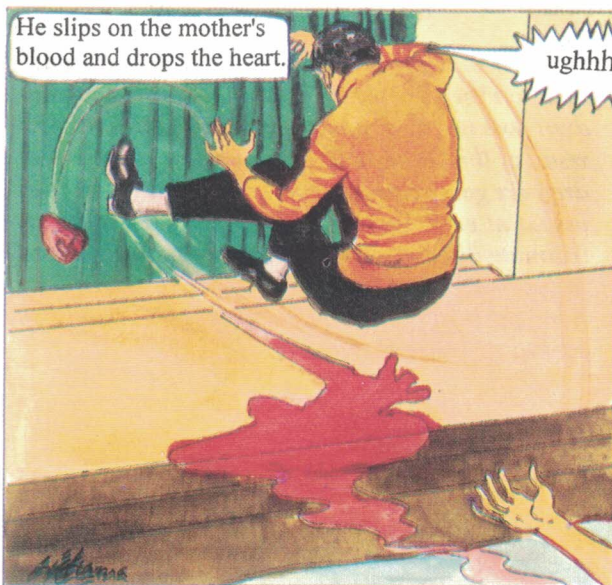
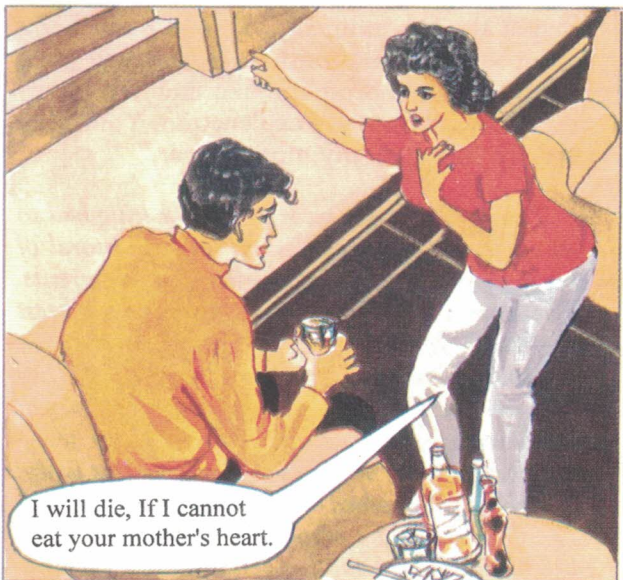
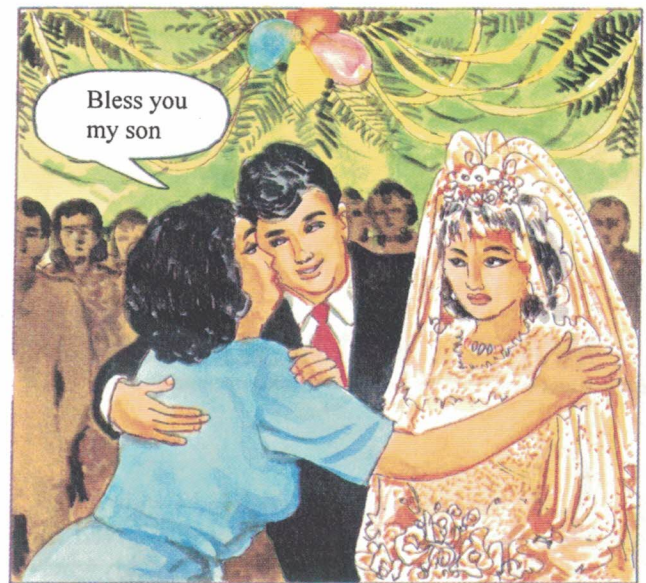
This was reported to the King, and he had the thief brought before him, and asked him why he bit off his mother's ear. The thief explained, "Your Majesty, I am the only son of my mother. She could have brought me up to be a good, virtuous person. Instead of doing that she encouraged me to live an unvirtuous life. She never advised me against my bad deeds.

"If she had warned me about the ill-effects of bad behaviour, I could have become a virtuous law-abiding citizen. But, she never did it. Therefore, I had to lose my life this way. I thought, even at the last moment, I should teach her a lesson so that other mothers at least will learn that they should bring up their children in virtuous ways. This is my explanation, Your Majesty, for biting off my mother's ear."

The story does not record what the king had to say about the thief's confession; but the moral of this story is a very strong warning to all parents. Whenever the parents detect even the slightest unvirtuous activity on the part of their children they should immediately take note of that. They must see to it that the bad behaviour is corrected. The parents must teach the children never to repeat that kind of unvirtuous deed. If this is not done the slight misdeed of childhood will grow into a grave crime and a whole host of criminal deeds which will bring about that person's ruin and probably the downfall of his parents as well.

Even in the modern world the kind of communication there should be between parents and children does not seem to exist in many families. As a result of this the parents cannot know if their children are going astray. Therefore, what is essential is that at each and every turn there should be an intimate discussion between parents and children to find out what influences they are exposed to. Even the least problematic development should be probed to prevent serious crisis.





A MOTHER'S HEART SPEAKS

In human society there is no other relationship that is more sacred than the affection between a mother and a child. But there are instances when this sacred relationship is rudely, harshly and harrowingly disrupted by some children who have been very badly misled by wicked people. A heart-rending story about a son who violated this relationship is told by an Italian tale, that makes even the toughest people weep.

The story underlines shockingly and movingly, the limitless love a mother has for her children, whatever faults they may have.

According to this story, once, there lived a couple who were very much in love with each other. They were both quite young and the husband adored the young wife intensely.

The mother of the husband loved her son very much. The young husband too loved his mother just as he loved her when he was a small child. The young wife, however, did not like her husband showing such deep affection towards his mother. She wanted her husband's love exclusively and completely to herself.

One day, she decided upon a very cruel course of action. For several days, she lay in bed groaning and whimpering. The fond husband asked her what was wrong. Even when she was

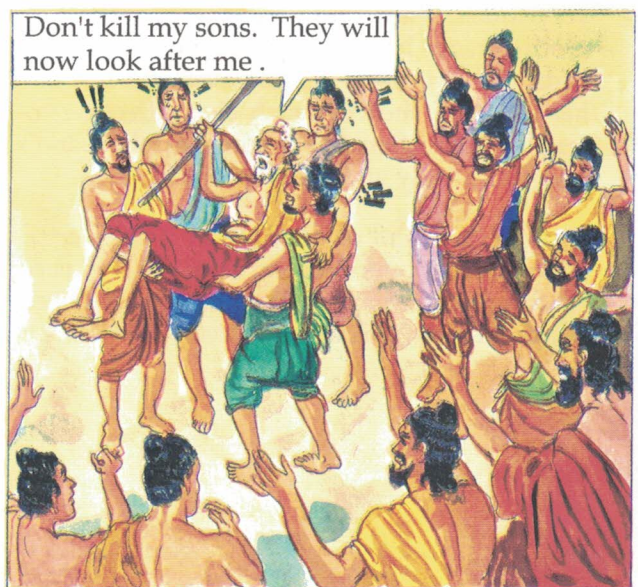
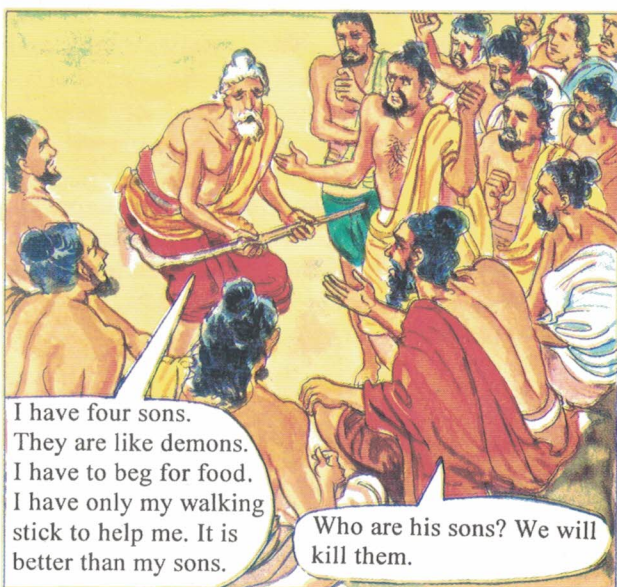
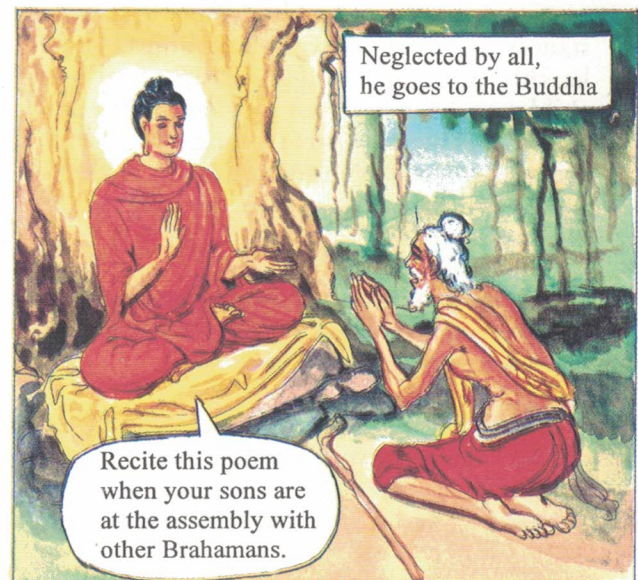
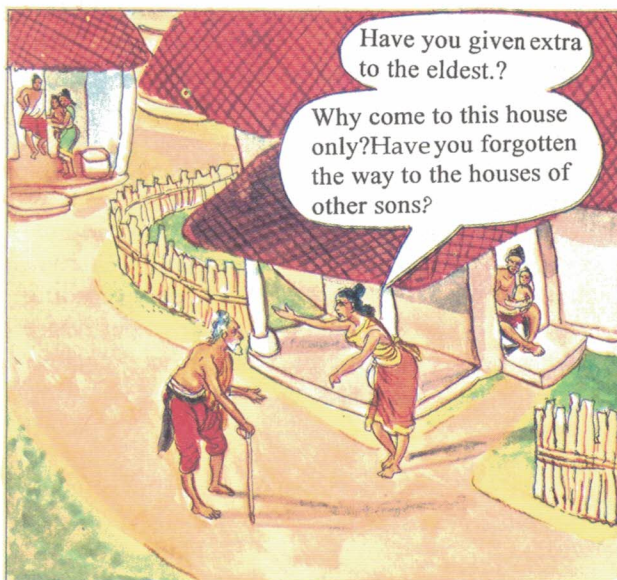
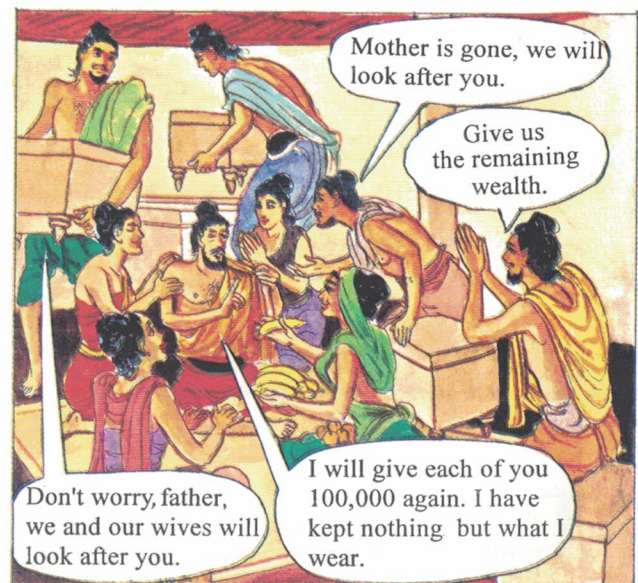
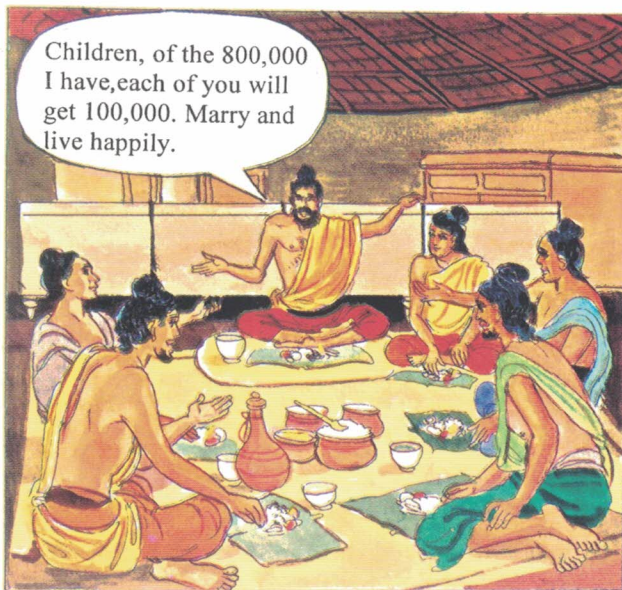
repeatedly asked this question, she kept silent. But at last she revealed the secret to her husband one night, "I am suffering because I have a deep unfulfilled desire". Husband asked, "What is it?" "I am reluctant to tell you this, my dear husband" replied the wife. "You know how much I love you. Therefore, you can tell me everything", said the husband. "My dear husband, I am suffering from a great yearning to eat your mother's heart. If this desire is not satisfied I will surely die." The husband was struck dumb by his wife's words. He kept on pleading with her. He asked her to have any other desire whatsoever, but not this. But all his pleadings were to no avail. She would not change her mind at all.

At last he decided that since he could not live without his wife, he will somehow fulfil her wish.

Because of the limitless attachment he had for his wife he went to his mother drunk and fully intoxicated. He did the deed of utmost cruelty of killing his mother. He took her heart in his hand and started to go home to his wife.

On his way, while climbing the steps, he slipped due to his drunkenness. The mother's heart he held in his hand fell off. Suddenly, the mother's heart spoke: "My dear son, did you hurt yourself when you fell?"





THE OLD MAN AND HIS WALKING STICK

In the days of the Buddha, there lived in Savatthi a certain Brahman who had four sons. The Brahman's wealth amounted to eight hundred thousand pieces of money. When his sons reached marriageable age, he arranged marriages for them and gave them four hundred thousand pieces of money. After the sons had married, the Brahman's wife died. The sons decided, "If this Brahman marries again, the family fortune will be divided among the next wife's children and there will be nothing left of it. Come then! Let us help our father and win his favour." Accordingly, they waited upon him faithfully, providing him with the choicest food and the finest clothes, rubbing his hands and feet, and performing all of the other duties.

Said they, "We will wait upon you this way as long as you live; give us the rest of your wealth also." Agreeing to this the Brahman gave each of them a hundred thousand more. Nothing but under and upper garments did he keep for himself; all the rest of his wealth and possessions he divided into four portions and handed over to his sons.

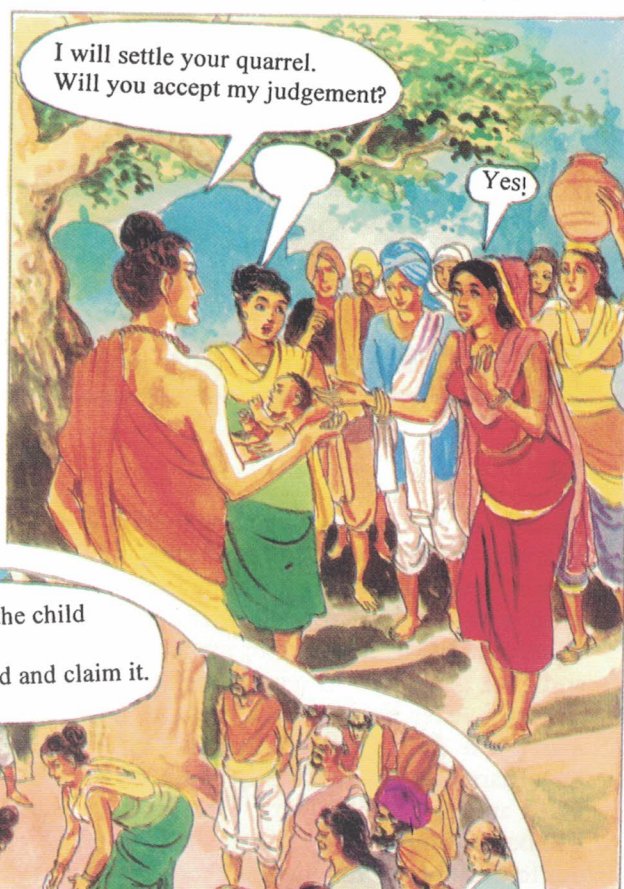
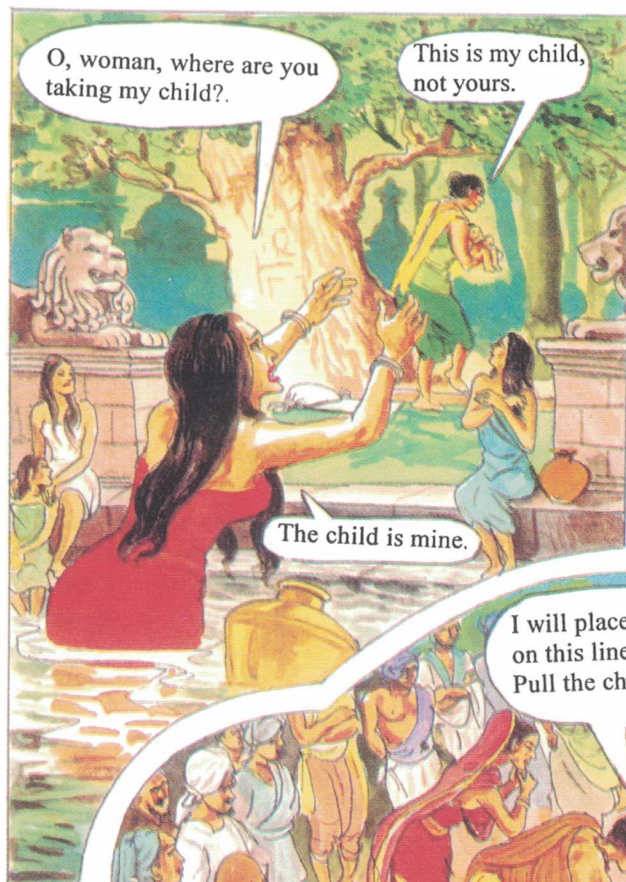
For a few days his oldest son looked after him. One day, however, as he was returning to the house of his oldest son after his bath, his daughter-in-law, who stood at the gate, said to him, "Did you give your oldest son a hundred or a thousand pieces of money more than you gave your other sons? You certainly gave each of your sons two hundred thousand pieces of money. Do you not know the way to the house of any of your other sons?" The Brahman answered angrily, "Perish, vile woman!" and went to the house of his second son. But in a few days he was driven from the house of his second son too, and in like manner from the houses of his two youngest sons as well. Finally he had no place to go to.

At last he went to the Buddha. The Buddha said to him, "Well then, Brahman, learn these Stanzas thoroughly, and when the people are gathered together in the hall and your sons are gathered together with them, recite them before the assembled company. Here are the lines, I desired them. I was happy when they were born. But now, prompted by their wives, they drive me out. They are demons in the form of sons. They throw me out in my old age. When a horse grows old, they stop giving food to him. They do the same to me. I have to beg food from door to door. My walking stick is more useful to me than my sons. The stick keeps away angry bulls and bad dogs. In darkness the walking stick goes in front of me. It allows me to avoid deep pits. With the help of the stick I can prevent falls."

He recited the stanzas when all - including his sons - were assembled. *Now at that time this was the law of mankind. If anyone who was supported by mother and father, does not in turn support mother and father, he shall be put to death.* Therefore the sons of the Brahman fell at their father's feet and begged him to spare their lives, saying, "Dear father, spare our lives!" Out of the softness of a father's heart the Brahman said, "Sirs, do not kill my sons; they will support me." The men said to his sons, "Sirs, if from this day you do not take proper care of your father, we will kill you." The sons, thoroughly frightened, seated their father in a chair, and carried him home. They anointed the body of their father with oil, flying this way and that in their haste, bathed him, using perfumes and aromatic powders, and having so done, summoned their wives and said to them, "From this day on you are to take proper care of our father; if you neglect this duty, we shall punish you."

It is a moral law that children should look after their aged parents.





MOTHER WHO REFUSED TO PULL INFANT

Once, a young mother took her infant child to the pond. She bathed her child in the pond and placed him on her clothes at the edge of the pond. The mother herself desired to take a bath. She went down to the pond while the child was by himself.

A woman, passing that way, saw the infant by the side of the pond. She stopped and looked admiringly at the child. She was quite attracted to the infant.

Seeing the mother bathing, the woman asked, "I like your infant very much. Do you mind if I took the infant in my arms for a moment?" The mother did not object to it. Next, the woman asked the mother: "Can I please suckle the infant?" The mother said it was all right.

The woman took the child in her hands and after a little while, started walking off with him.

Seeing this, the mother hurried out of the pond and began running after the woman. The mother got hold of the woman and tried to take back her infant. The woman did not give the child. She kept on saying that it is her child. She accused the real mother of trying to steal her child.

The two women continued to quarrel. When they were right in front of the Assembly Hall where Sage Mahaushada dispensed justice, the sage had the women brought before him. After listening to their stories, the sage asked whether they would accept his decision. They said 'yes'.

The sage had a line drawn in the middle of the Hall. He asked the two women to stand, one on the side of the infant's head the other at the feet of the infant.

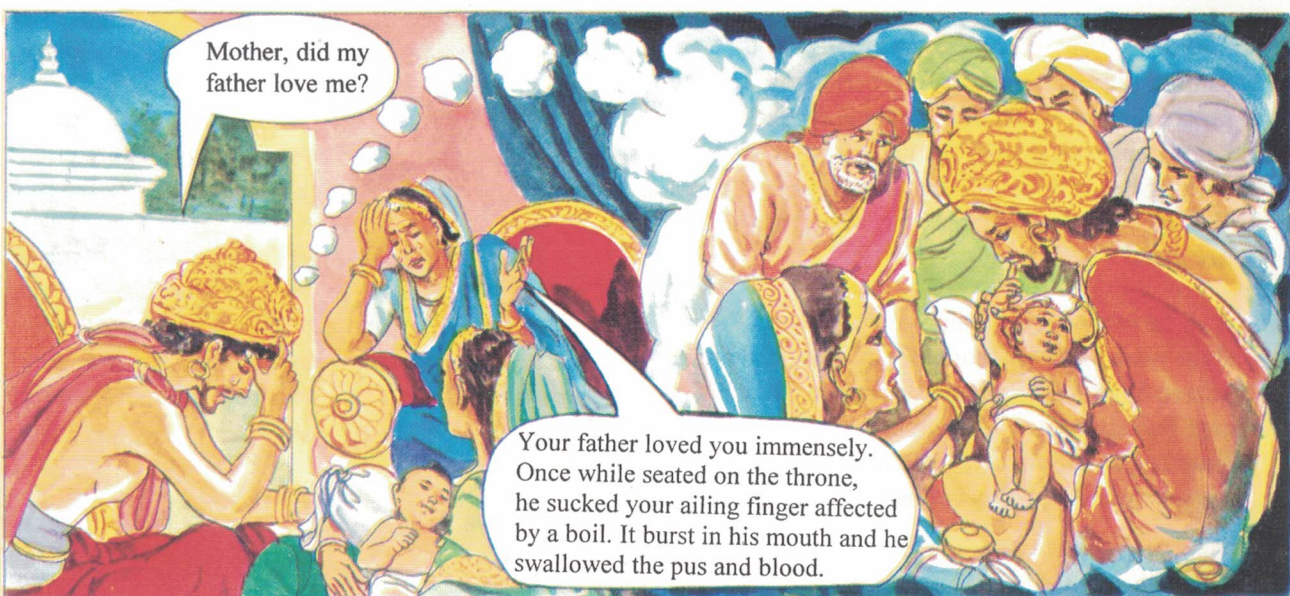
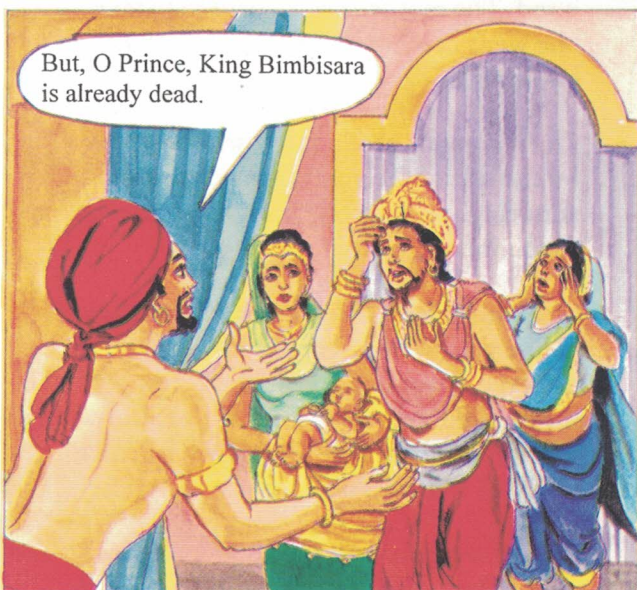
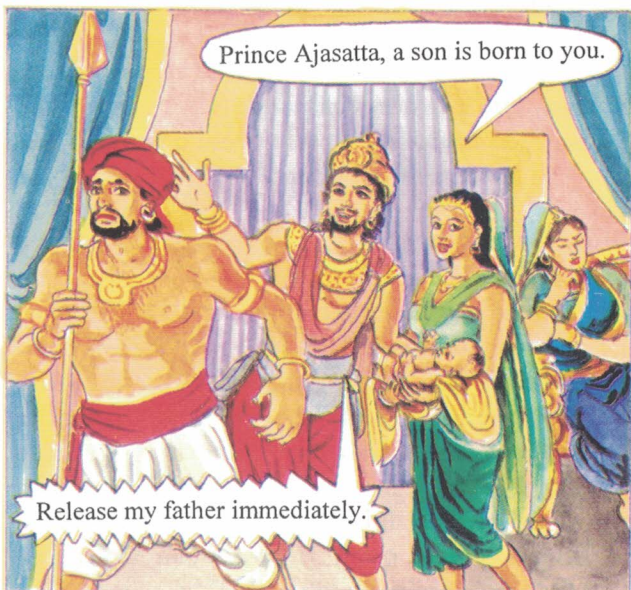
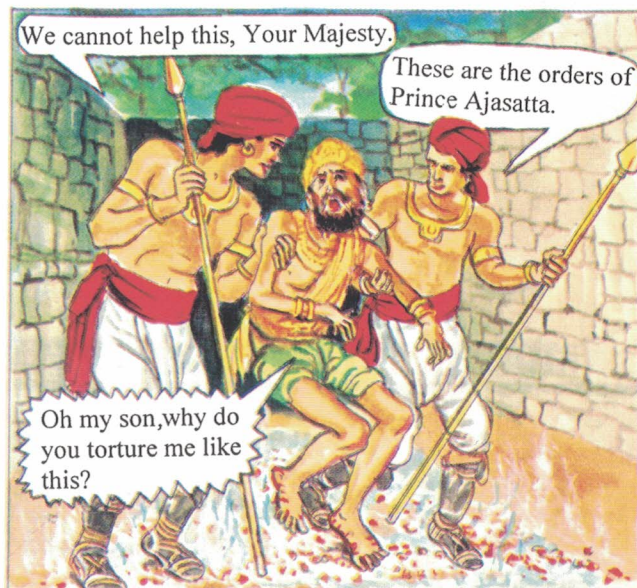
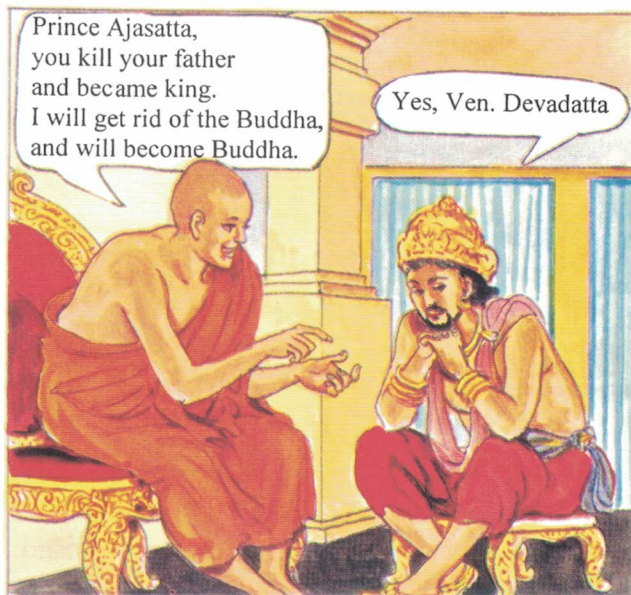
He asked the wicked woman to pull the infant towards her with the infant's arms. The mother was asked to pull the child towards her, with the legs of the infant.

Both of them got hold of the child and started pulling. The infant started to cry in pain. Immediately, the mother stopped pulling, let go of the child and started weeping. The sage turned to the people who were assembled and asked. "Is it the heart of the mother which is tender towards the child or is it another woman's heart?" They all answered: "It is the heart of a mother that is tender towards the child." "Then, who is the real mother, the woman who let go or the woman who pulled hard?" the sage asked. "Of course, the real mother is the woman who let go of the child because she did not want to hurt him," the people said.

The real mother took her child and went away, thanking the sage.

This story highlights a perennial truth. Mothers would never want to hurt their children even slightly. Here, the mother did not want to hurt her son even minutely inspite of the fact that the child would have been taken away by another woman.





UNBORN ENEMY

Prince Ajatasattu, instigated by Devadatta Thera, attempted to kill his father - King Bimbisara and to usurp the throne. The prince was caught plotting against the King, his father. The father, King Bimbisara, took pity on his son. Instead of punishing him for his misdeed, the King gave him the throne as he wanted it. But, the wicked son was not appeased. He had his father put in prison. He wanted to starve his father to death. He allowed only his mother free access to his father's prison-cell. The affectionate Queen took along food to her husband, concealing it in her garments. The Prince objected to this. Next, she carried food concealed in her hair-knot. The Prince did not allow this either. She then resorted to another stratagem. She would bathe herself in scented water and besmear her body with a mixture of honey, butter, ghee and molasses. The King would lick her body. The ever-watchful Prince found this out too and stopped her visits. King Bimbisara then did not have any more food to live on. He attained spiritual joy by walking up and down as he was a Stream Winner (Sotapanna). At the end, the cruel son was determined to put the king to death. He ordered his barber to cut open his soles and put salt and oil in them and heat them on a charcoal-fire. The King who saw the barber approaching thought for a moment that the son, regretting his bad behaviour and his wickedness, was sending the barber to shave his beard and trim his hair, which were overgrown, before setting him free.

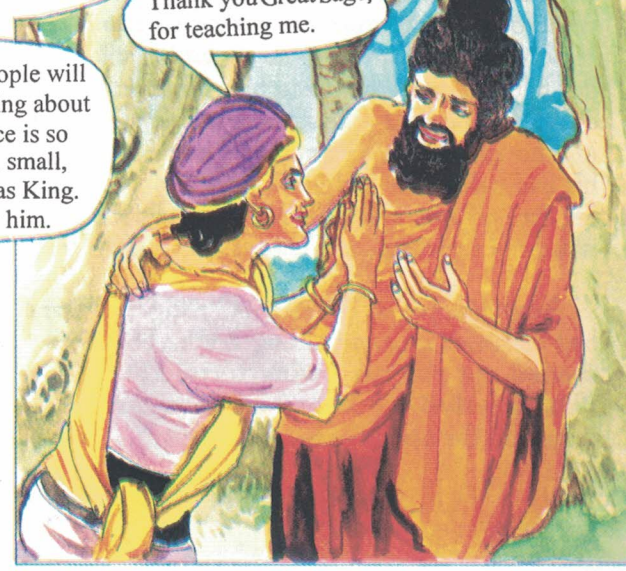
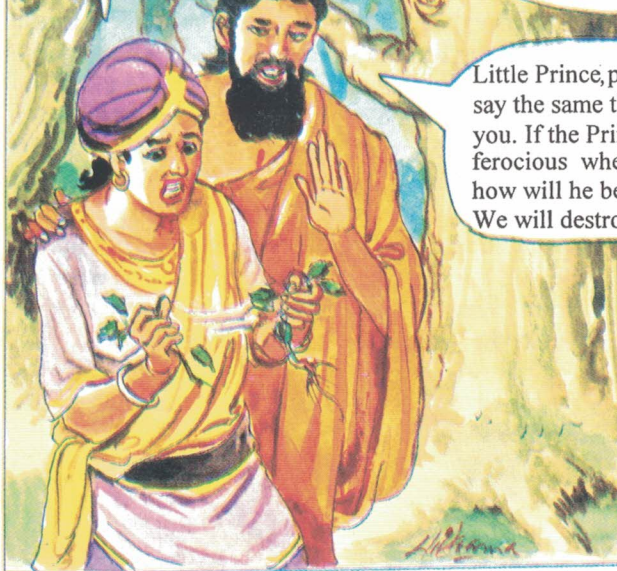
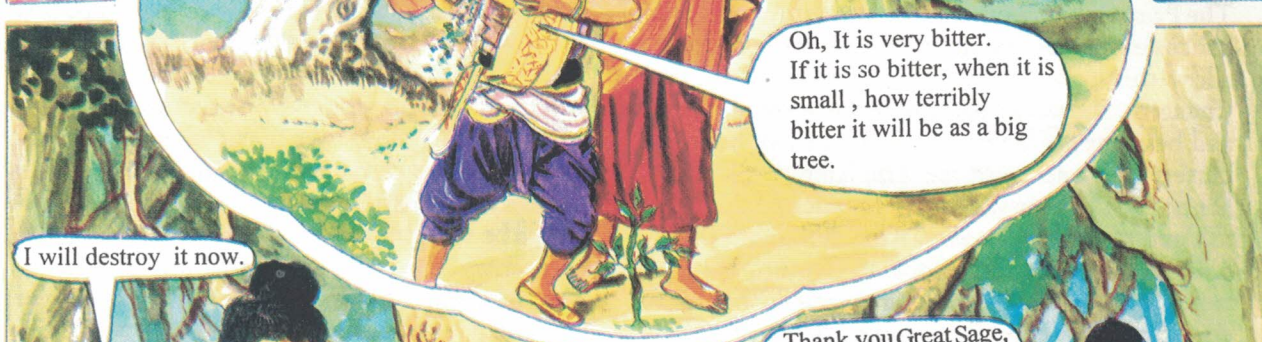
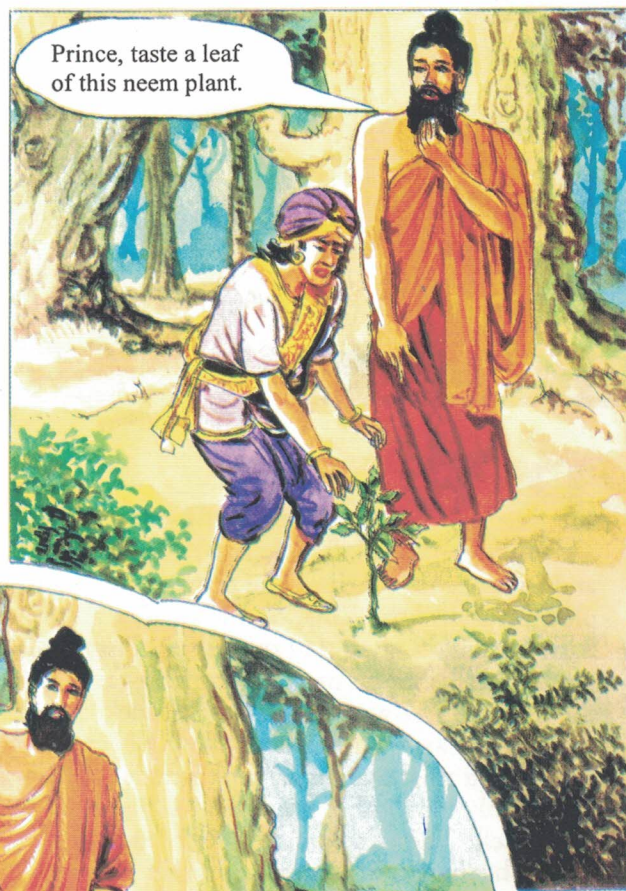
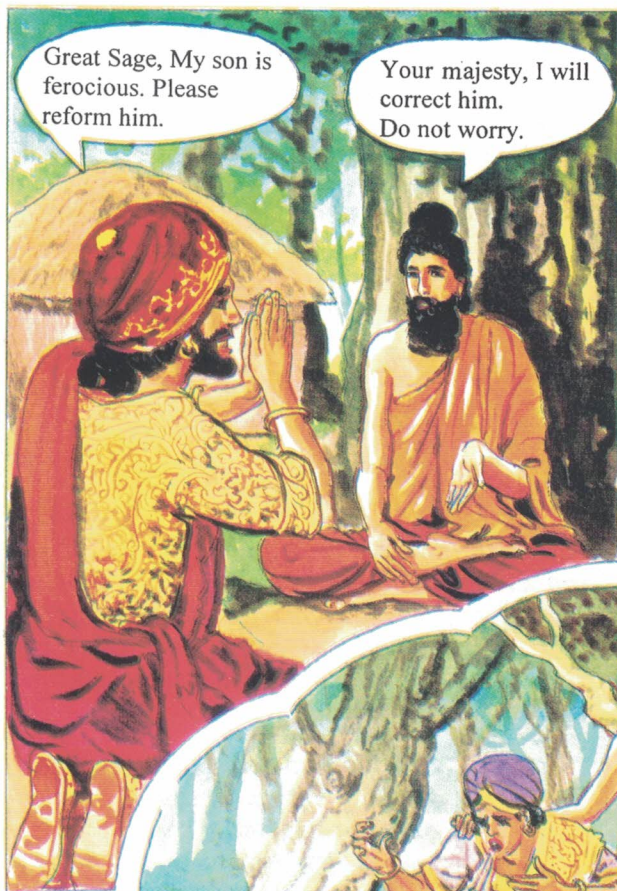
But his hopes were shattered. King Bimbisara had to suffer a heart-rending death. The barber carried out the harrowing torture and King Bimbisara died a victim to inhuman torture inflicted on the orders of his own son.

On that very day, a son was born to Prince Ajatasattu - now King Ajatasattu. The love of his son affected him to the very depth of his being. Immediately, he remembered his own father. He ordered his men to run quickly and release his father King Bimbisara. King's men informed him that his father is already dead.

He turned to his mother, and asked, "O Mother, did my father love me when I was a child?" She told Ajatasattu how she had a deep desire to drink, the blood from King Bimbisara's right hand when Ajatasattu was in her womb. She kept this to herself, as she could not reveal this to the King. As her desire was not fulfilled she became pale and thin. Her condition worsened as days went by. When King Bimbisara learnt what was wrong, he fulfilled her desire with the greatest joy. The soothsayers predicted that the son in her womb would be an enemy to his father. The Queen tried to destroy the child in the womb. But King Bimbisara did not allow it. The child was named Ajatasattu - the Unborn Enemy. The Queen tried to destroy the prince, even after he was born. Once again, King Bimbisara prevented it. On one occasion, the child Prince was suffering from a boil on his finger. No one could comfort him, as he cried out in pain. King Bimbisara, was at Royal Court dispensing justice, surrounded by his ministers and courtiers. The King took the Child Prince on his lap and sucked the affected finger. Inside his mouth, the boil burst and the King swallowed its pus and blood. King Ajatasattu suffered intensely for the cruelty he inflicted upon his father.

The birth of a son makes a person realize the depth of parents' affection.





THE LITTLE PRINCE WHO DESTROYED A PLANT

An ancient king had a stubborn son. He was fierce. Everybody was frightened of him. The people of the country, the courtiers, the ministers and even the king, was frightened of him. This troubled the King's mind sorely.

He called in a sage. The King explained the little Prince's behaviour to the sage and asked the sage to help him. The sage told the King, "Your Majesty, do not be worried, I will reform him."

The great sage took the prince to a garden. While walking along, the sage showed the Prince a little plant. It was a neem plant. The sage asked the Prince to pluck a leaf of the plant and taste it. When he put it in his mouth, he found the taste of the leaf was extremely bitter. He spat it out.

"If the leaves of that plant are so bitter when the plant is small, how bitter will its leaves be when the plant is fully-grown," the Prince said. "I will not allow it to grow," the Prince told the Great sage with determination.

He pulled out the plant and tore it to bits. The prince was very angry. He kept on spitting out.

The Great Sage noted his behaviour. He asked the Prince "Did you find the leaf of the little plant very bitter?"

"Yes" the Prince replied. "Why," the sage enquired, "did you destroy the plant?" "If it is so bitter when it is just a little plant, how extremely bitter will it be when it grows? I destroyed it, so it will not grow into a big tree."

The Great Sage nodded his head. "Now, Prince, you too are like that little plant. As a very small Prince you are fierce. When eventually you become King, can you imagine how your behaviour will worsen? The people will want to destroy you when you are fierce as a small prince. They will say, just as you said of the plant, if he is so fierce when he is very young, how fierce will he be when he is King."

The Prince at once understood that he has to mend his ways. He thanked the great sage and corrected his behaviour. He became a great King, loved by all the people of his kingdom.

The moral of the story is if children listen to the good advice they are given by parents and elders, they will certainly succeed in life, correcting their faults.





YOUNG PERSON VISUALIZING OLD AGE

The indifference some young people have towards adults, aging people and the aged, can to a great extent, be reduced if they took time occasionally to visualize their own old age. On a more positive note, such visualization of one's old age will enable the young to have a greater understanding of the older people. This will result in increased affection between the young and the old.

As the young person grows older, his faculties will begin to weaken. Childhood merges into youth. The care and protection exerted by parents, older relatives tend to lessen. One is on one's own. No one accompanies you to school. You have to do your things yourself.

Parents are not much interested in feeding you when you are a youth. You see younger people playing about; those things are not for you now. You have more serious purposes in life.

When you are employed and married your problems start growing. No one helps you to solve them. You have to look after your wife and children. Their needs have to be looked into.

Health becomes a problem. Various ailments assail you. Eyesight gets affected. Glasses are needed to read and write. Delicacies that you liked can no longer be enjoyed. Hearing becomes faulty.

You just cannot run about with the agility you possessed in childhood. Physical exertion tires you. Mind starts to waver. Concentration becomes difficult.

Even simple acts like walking about or sitting down prove irksome. Aches and pains assail the body.

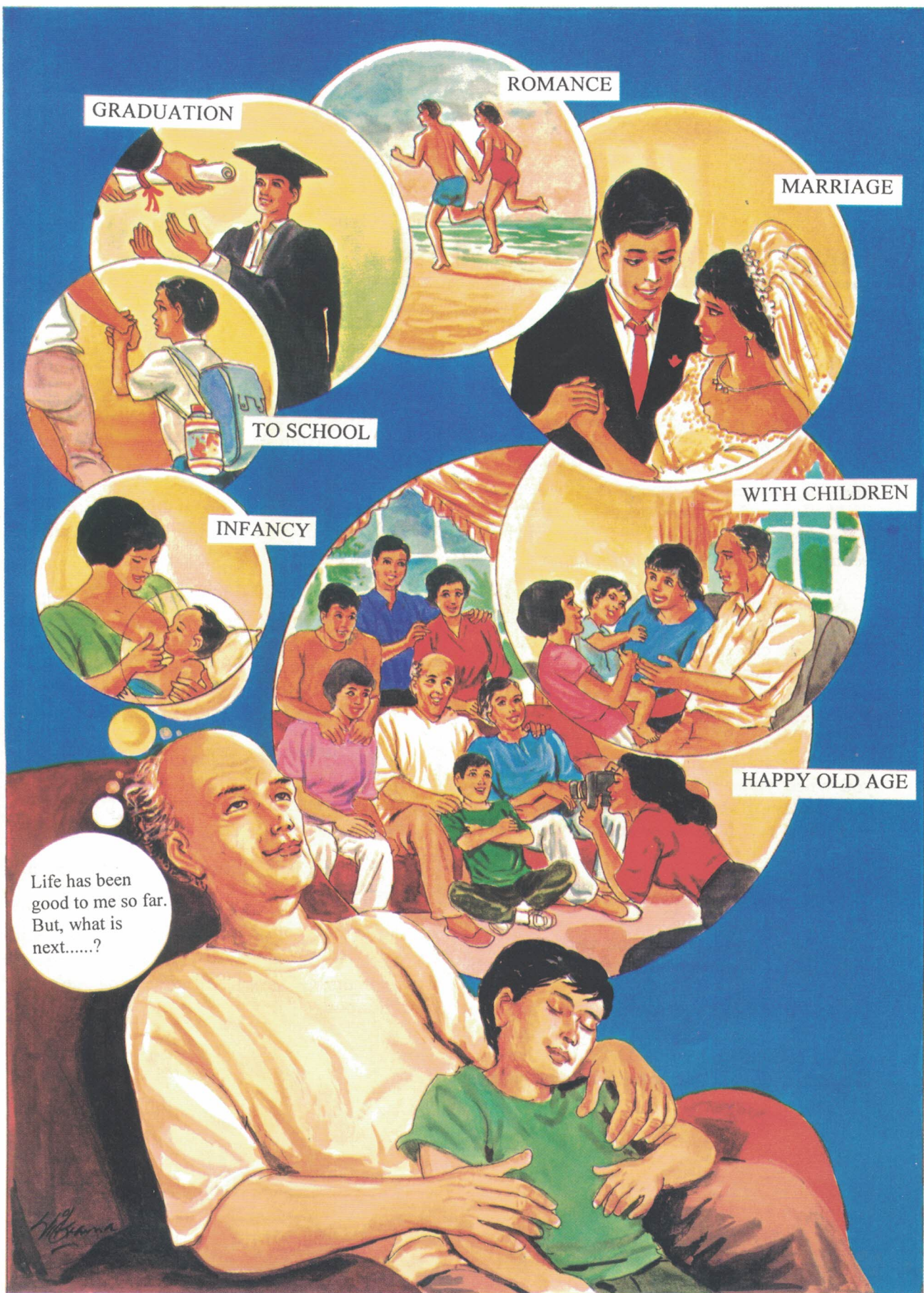
The skin you cared for with such keen attention, when you were young, begins to wrinkle. The jet black, well combed hair that attracted so many of the opposite sex is now turning grey. The thinning hair is making you bald. The teeth are mostly gone or are going.

You become more and more isolated from the world. You live mostly with yourself. People help you with your needs. A good part of the memory is lost.

An effort has to be made to recollect the simplest things.

Days pass. You are at death's door. Childhood, youth, middle-age, and early old-age are all forgotten. One is helpless as during one's early childhood.





OLD PERSON RECOLLECTING YOUTH

For true harmony between parents and children, mutual understanding is quite essential. Whenever the elderly become impatient with the behaviour of the young, the aged people must try to remember their own youth. This will enable them to have greater sympathy towards the young, even if their ways tend to irritate the elderly at times.

Most elderly people can recollect the care-free days they spent in their youth. Games and pastimes filled their days. School-days, for the most part, were fun. The playmates, the school picnics, exams were all part of the pleasure that childhood brought.

At home, there were days of festivities and ceremonies. New Year celebrations, the love bestowed by parents, brothers and sisters, and the affection that was duly returned, are fresh in the memory even of those who are in advanced old-age.

Visits to places of religion, listening to discourses delivered by men of religion remain indelibly etched in the mind.

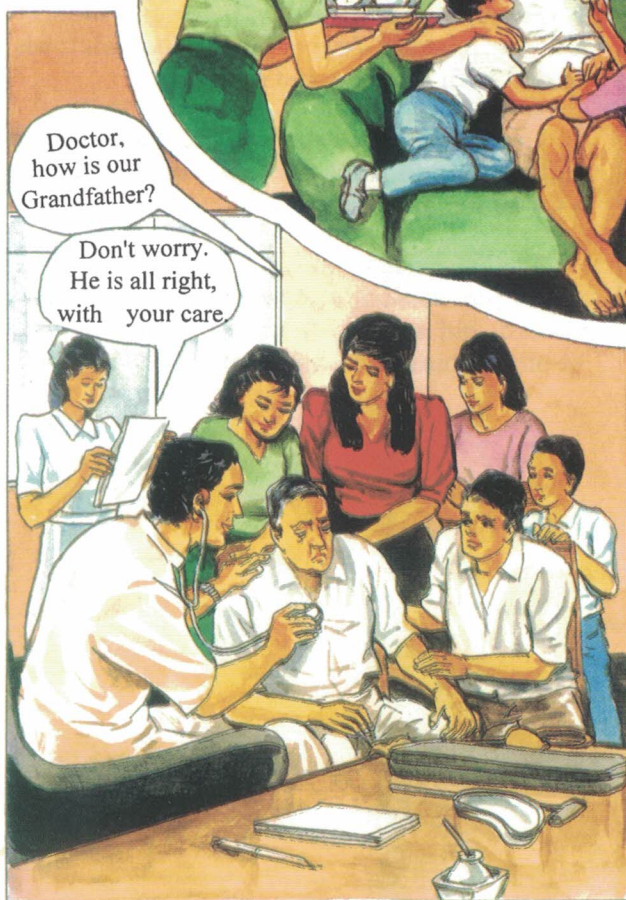
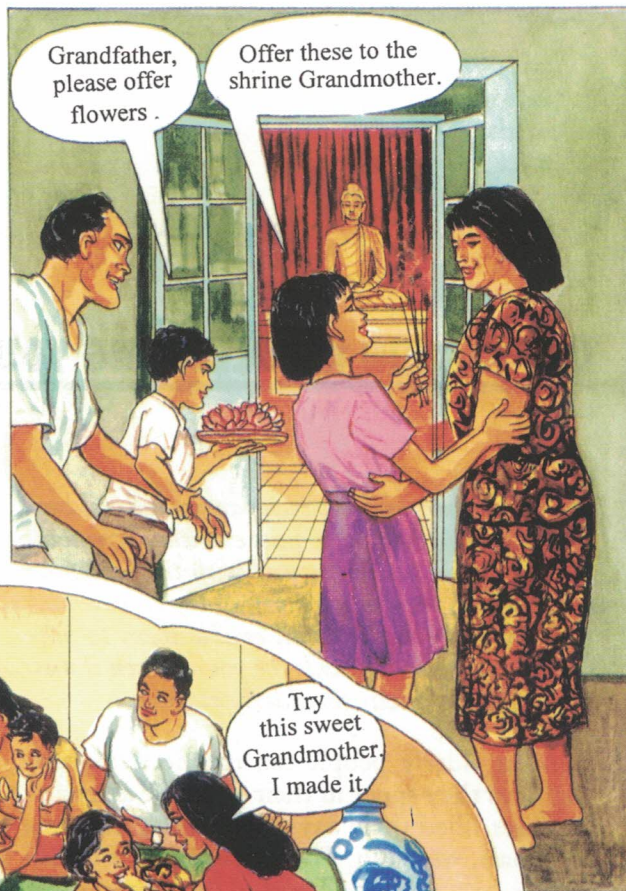
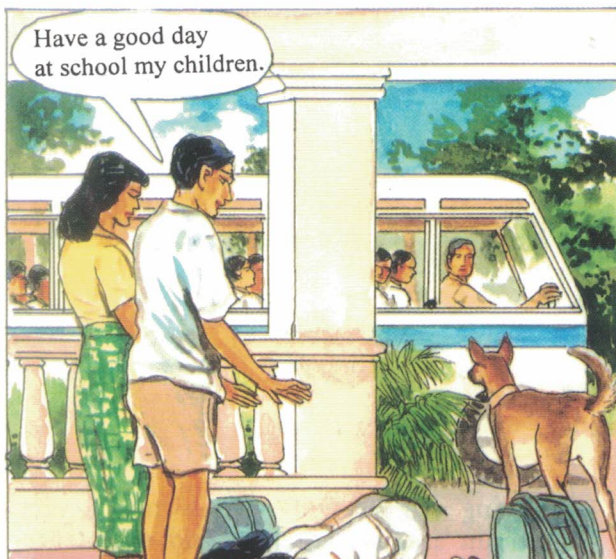
Giving and receiving gifts formed a very significant area of the childhood experience. Teenage imperceptibly merges into early youth. At this time, romance begins to dawn on one's life. Young men start taking special note of young girls. Young girls on their part, get romantically inclined towards boys who are attractive to them. Secret meetings, the uttering of the first words of love become landmarks of life. The whole world seems to have a special glow.

Eventually, the school-days come to an end. It is time to earn one's own living and support one's own family. At work, the young adult has to deal with his peers and superiors.

Life moves on towards marriage. The first child is born, allowing the young adult to savour a joy he has never known.

The life-cycle keeps on turning - taking the young person along a process that leads steadily towards old age, which is the logical outcome of birth, youth and adulthood.





THE HAPPY FAMILY

When something goes wrong, it is seen clearly. For days on end, traffic flows smoothly along roads. No one seems to notice it. But, if an accident were to occur occasionally, everybody will be talking about it. It is the same thing even about human relations. When those relations take place without an irregularity they are not very much noticed.

This holds true of family relations as well. When family life is troubled, or when there are irregularities and quarrels, those untoward things are quite clearly perceived.

But all the world over there are many families that lead happy lives. They should be the model and the ideal to all.

In an ideal family, the children honour their parents and elders. The children take pleasure in attending to the needs of their parents and grandparents. The children receive the blessings of their elders, at each and every time.

The children in the family, the grownups and the young help the elders in the family in a variety of ways. The elders are attended to in terms of their worldly needs. Their food is dutifully prepared for them by the young. They enquire

into their health. The religious needs of the parents and the grandparents receive the attention of the young ones. The elders are regularly conducted to places of worship. In the process of helping the elders, the young people too grow up into their responsibilities.

The younger members of the family consider it their duty to take the elders to the Doctor, on a regular basis. When they fall ill, the young ones are around helping them to get well. Being affectionately cared for, parents and grandparents lead healthy lives, as the care of their children fulfils them.

For children in a happy family, their elders become a way of life. The praises of their parents and grandparents encourage the young ones to strive still harder to make a success of life.

A family in which the elders and the young ones live happily and harmoniously, symbolizes the best in worldly lives.

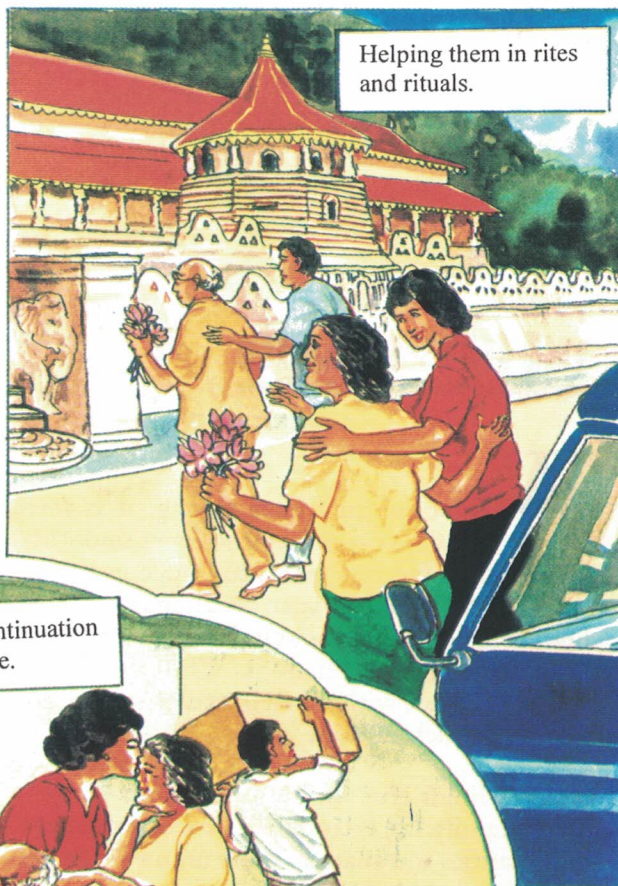
From very early on, children should be taught to contribute their share to make life at home, happy. Parents themselves should set an example by refraining from quarrels, disputes and creating unpleasantness.



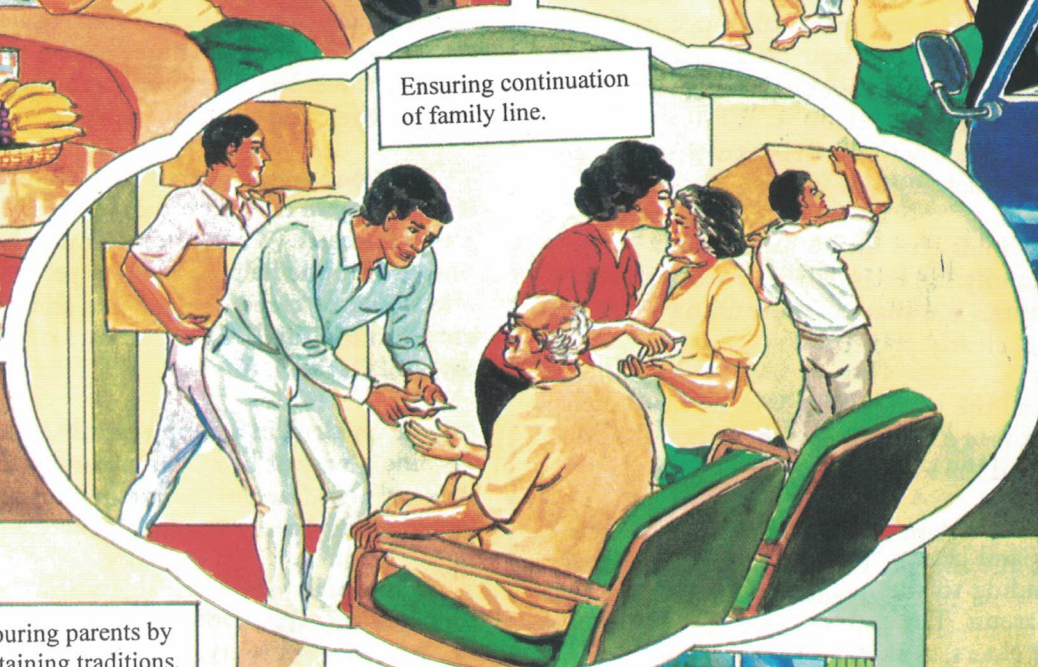
Looking after Parents.



Helping them in rites and rituals.



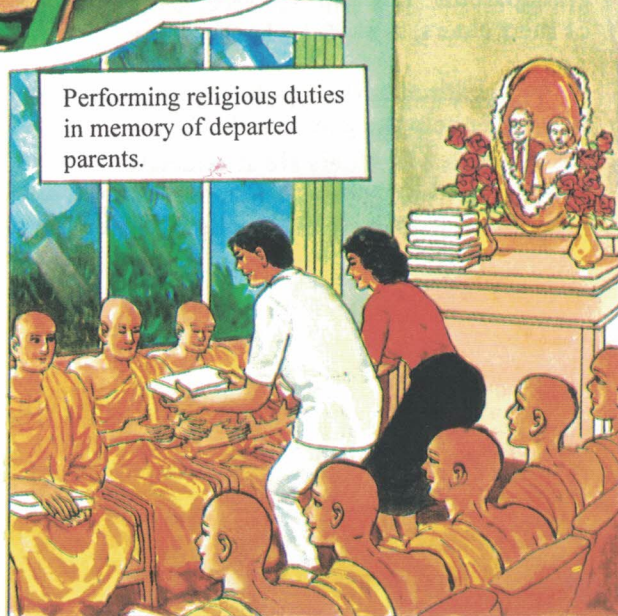
Ensuring continuation of family line.



Honouring parents by maintaining traditions.



Performing religious duties in memory of departed parents.



TAKING CARE OF PARENTS

The Buddha praises the virtues of parents. Here, the Buddha says that parents are Brahmas. They are the first teachers. Parents deserve to be given offerings. They have a great love of children. These are the views of the Buddhas and sages.

Brahma is a word for parents. Maha Brahma, the Great Creator, (that is according to Hinduism) has compassion, love, kindness and equanimity towards the world. Parents too have this four-fold attitude towards their children. Therefore parents are the Brahmas to their children. When the child is in the mother's womb, parents have compassion towards the unborn child. "When can we see our child?" they say, and live in hope.

After the child is born, when the child lies helplessly on his back, the child cries, troubled by flies or mosquitoes or insects or due to thirst or hunger. Parents who hear them cry begin to have an immense love towards their children. When the children grow up, utter childish words and reach the playful age, parents have a vast kindness towards them. When the child grows into adulthood, and has a family of his own, the parents begin to have an equanimity towards their children, as they are aware that their children can look after themselves now.

Teachers

This way as parents have qualities that are very much like those of the Great Brahma, parents become Brahmas to their children. Parents are also described as the "first teachers".

The child in his or her early years is an innocent being. He does not know what is good or what is bad. Gradually, the child begins to discern what is good and what is bad. This is due to the instruction he gets from his parents. From the very

early days of the child, parents advise and instruct them in proper behaviour, and in virtuous conduct. Parents say, "My son, this is how you should sit. This is how you should lie down. This is how you should take your meals. This is your father. This is your mother. This is your brother. This is your sister." Because of this parents are described as the "First Teachers".

Parents are also described as "deserving to be given offerings." The mother bears the child in her womb for nine months. From the time the child is born, day and night, sleeplessly, the parents clear away the child's excreta, urine, mucus etc., without any hesitation though they are dirty. The mother turns her blood into milk and feeds the child. They bring up the children without allowing their limbs to become deformed and crippled. They have a great affection for their children. Even if they themselves starved, the parents give whatever they get to their children. If they get anything delicious, they will not eat it but will give it to their children. When the children fall ill, they strive with no thought about their lives, to get their children cured.

Economy

The parents practise economy even though they may have hundreds of things to do. Parents save their hard-earned money for their children. Parents help their children in a multiplicity of ways. The Buddha stated it thus "O Bhikkus, parents help the children in a great many ways. They protect the lives of their children and they nourish the children. The parents teach the way of the world to their children."

Parents who are of such great assistance to the children possess qualities that cannot be adequately described. Therefore they deserve all those the



children can offer them with whatever difficulty the children may bring them from even far away places. This way, the parents are described as "being fit to be given offerings."

Parents are also described as full of love for the children. They are described that way, since parents have a true affection for children, whatever may be the troubles they face from their children, the parents tolerate all that and show their affection to their children. Parents provide benefits even to those children who try to destroy them. Here, the life of King Bimbisara is an apt instance.

The following has been said to show how children should behave towards their parents. "Parents possess endless virtue. Therefore, the wise worship them. They look after them in various ways. The wise provide their parents with food and drink and all their other needs. They see to it that they sleep well. They bathe them. They wash their feet."

Only those grown-up children who are employed, can provide their parents with food, drink and other necessities of life. Others cannot look after their parents that way. But, worshipping their parents can be practised even by those children who are not employed. The parents themselves must train their young to worship parents.

Worship

There are several ways of worshipping. Worshipping is done with the worshipper's two hands, two knees and the forehead touching the ground simultaneously. This form of worship is adopted for those who should be given the highest respect. Parents deserve such high respect. There are other forms as well. You can worship, standing up, with the palms of the two hands touching each other and with the head bowed. This form can be practised constantly at any place. When children go out of the house, they can worship parents this way. Children must be trained to greet parents returning home after a journey, using this form of worship. Whenever possible children can be trained to worship with the five points touching the ground simultaneously.

For those children who have become indebted to their parents, it is not at all easy to escape that debt. There is hardly anyone in the world who help children as much as their parents. Therefore, all children living in this world are indebted to their parents and, it is not easy to get relief from

this debt. Therefore it has been said by the Buddha that there are two persons in the world whom one cannot avoid helping. These two are the parents.

How can relief be obtained from this debt? "If, O monks, a child brings the right views to parents who have gone astray into false views; if unvirtuous parents are brought into virtuous ways; if miserly parents are made generous; if ignorant parents are made wise, children can get relief from the debt they owe to their parents." This was the debt relief advocated by the Buddha. Therefore, those who are keen to look after their parents should not stop at providing them with food, drink, shelter and other necessities. If their parents are devoid of such virtues as devotion and discipline, they must see to it that the parents cultivate such virtues. To bring this about, they themselves can guide the parents. Or else, they must get wise people, well-versed in righteous ways to instruct their parents.

A child who performs such duties can be considered as a person who has adequately paid back the debt he owes to his parents. The Bodhisatta (Aspirant Buddha) Himself looked after parents in the highest possible manner. The Birth tale, entitled "Matu Poshaka Jataka" (The story of supporting the mother) shows how the Aspirant Buddha, when he was born as an Elephant King, nursed His blind mother. "Nandiya Jataka Tale" indicates how the Aspirant Buddha, born as a monkey, sacrificed His life for His mother. "Sama Jataka Tale" shows how the Aspirant Buddha cared for His blind parents when He was Prince Sama.

Virtues

Even after He became the Buddha, the Supremely Enlightened, He described the virtues of looking after parents. Without stopping at preaching He set an example through His own practice of caring for parents.

Prince Siddhartha's mother passed away just one week after the Prince's birth. After He became Buddha, He went to Heaven in search of His mother. There, He preached her the doctrine and saw to it that she attain the Fruit of Sotapatti (Stream winning). He went and met his father. He guided him to attain Arahanta (saint-hood) before he passed away. As for His stepmother, who brought him up, He gave her higher ordination as a nun. He saw to it that she attained the noble status of Sainthood (Arahant).



It is of course difficult to show adequate gratitude to one's parents, as the good they do to a child is limitless. But, it is a grave error if one does not make one's parents happy doing whatever they can to help the parents, however little it may be. In the past such negligence of one's parents was considered a great crime. Those children who enjoyed comfort, neglecting their parents were put to death according to a law that prevailed among the Brahmins. This shows the high significance given to the caring of parents. Today, the children of rich parents tend to look after their parents, fearing perhaps that the parents may not give them a share of their wealth. But, at times, when poor parents visit their rich children, they show only scant respect for the parents. This may perhaps be due to the fact there are no laws like those that existed among the Brahmins. It is only in a few families that the parents are looked after well. Some children are in the habit of indicating a fault on the part of the parents as a pretext for neglecting them.

Forgiving

Children should look after their parents, forgiving faults even if they had any. Faults in the caring of parents by children are greater than the faults of parents in their behaviour towards children. If parents were to neglect their children, taking such faults as disobedience into account, not one tenth of those in the world today would have been among the living. Most would have died due to the negligence of parents. Parents nurture their children, without taking any notice of the errors on the part of children. It is a grave error indeed, to maltreat parents on the pretext of some faults on their part in the past. Even if the parents are in error in some way, how can the vast quantum of good done by parents to children when they were young be forgotten? That good never disappears. In today's world there is a prevailing attitude children have towards their parents. Some children tend to argue this way, "I was given only a little." "Nothing was written in my name. Those who received much or those who inherited parental wealth should look after the parents." On these grounds they neglect parents.

There is no convention or law that says that parents should divide their wealth equally among their children. Giving what they have to someone they like, is not a fault. Of many children, if there is an obedient, virtuous child who looks after the parents with greater devotion than others, it is not an unreasonable act to treat him better.

There is no reason why the parents should treat a disobedient, sinful child who does not care for the parents, in the same manner as they treat a virtuous child.

A person blinded by a greed for wealth forgets the good done by parents, on the pretext that the share of the parental wealth he gets is insufficient. To him, his attitude seems reasonable. But, it is a grave crime. Does the good done by parents disappear because they did not give part of their wealth? Not at all. All must care for their parents whether the parental wealth was given to them or to some others. Those who treat their parents harshly come to a bad end. A person provides food and drink and other necessities of life to one's parents through what he earned by just means. He looks after the needs of parents himself. He gets the parents medically attended to when they fall ill. In many such ways, he looks after his parents. Such a person earns praises in life itself as a virtuous person who has a sense of gratitude and cares for his parents. Even after death, he is born in heaven and enjoys heavenly happiness, due to the merit he has acquired by caring for his parents.

Hunt

Those who worship parents escape even demons. This old story illustrates this. Once, in a previous birth the Aspirant Buddha was born a poor householder. He supported his parents. One day, the King of Benares went out to the forest to hunt deer, with his retinue. He started the deer hunt stating that if a deer escaped through a given place, the member of the hunting party standing nearest to that place will be fined. A deer came right near the King. The King seeing the deer coming near him, shot it an arrow. The deer, seeing the arrow coming towards him, avoided it and lay down on the ground pretending to be dead. The King went near the deer, thinking that it was dead. But, at the approach of the King, the deer ran away. The others laughed at the King. The King felt ashamed. All alone, he gave chase to the deer, killed the deer and cut it in two with his sword. He started back carrying the parts of the deer pingowise. He felt extremely exhausted and rested a while under a tree. When he got ready to return, the demon named "Makhadeva" who lived in that tree, got hold of the king saying, "Stop. You are my prey now." The King, frightened, asked him, "Do you eat only today or do you eat on all days?" "If I get food, I eat everyday," the demon replied. Then the King said: "You eat this deer today. From tomorrow on, I will send you

one man each day with a plate of rice". The demon said, "If that were so, you can go now. But, if some day you fail to send, I will eat you that day." The King returned to his city and from the next day, he started sending one man from the prison each day. As time went on the prisons became empty. The King was frightened. He had a bundle of thousand gold coins placed on an Elephant, and had it go through all streets, proclaiming "If there is someone who is not frightened to take a plate of rice to the demon, he can take these gold coins." The Aspirant Buddha took the bundle of gold coins, gave it to his mother and appeared before the King. The King asked him, "Will you take the rice to the demon?" He said, "Yes, O King." The King asked what he would need for the trip. He said, "I need the sword, your golden shoes and the White Parasol." The King gave him all those things and servants to take the golden bowl containing rice.

Demon

The Aspirant Buddha went near the tree in which the demon lived. He had the golden shoes on. He held the white parasol over his head. He kept the bowl of rice on the blade of the sword and gave it to the demon. The demon thought, "I will lure him to the shade of the tree and will eat him too." The demon said, "Man, come here. Let both of us eat this rice." He has a right to eat anyone who comes within the shade of the tree.

The Aspirant Buddha replied him thus, "If you ate me, no one will bring you rice hereafter, saying that you ate even Suthana, the man who takes care of his mother. I do not tread on the shade of your tree. I am wearing shoes. I am not under the shade of your tree. I am under the white umbrella. Therefore you cannot eat me. Our king too lives far away. You cannot eat him. If you do not obey my words, I will cut you in two with my sword." The demon thought what he says is reasonable. He said, "You go unharmed and see your mother." The Aspirant Buddha took him to the city and saw to it that he got his daily meals.

This way, those who care for their parents escape even demons. Therefore, looking after parents is a great noble act. In the discourse on "The Outcasts", the Buddha says, "those who neglect their old parents who are past their youth, even when they can afford to look after them, such a person is an outcast." In the discourse on "Decline" the Buddha says, "Those who neglect their old parents, who are past their youth, even when they can

afford to look after them, that is an act that leads to decay and decline".

Children are of three kinds. Firstly there are those whose qualities are even higher than those of their parents. They are described as 'atijata' (of higher quality). Next, there are those children who have the same qualities as their parents. They are 'anujata' (of the same quality). The third category of children is called 'avajata' - those who are of inferior quality to their parents.

Sons

In some instances, the parents may not resort to the Three Refuges - Buddha, Dhamma (The Teaching) and Sangha (The Brotherhood). They may not be devoid of the fivefold evil actions, namely, taking life, stealing, sexual misbehaviour, uttering falsehood and taking intoxicants. They may be unvirtuous. But the son takes the Three Refuges. He avoids the five-fold evil actions. He is virtuous. Since he is higher in moral stature, he is described as 'atijata' (of higher quality). If the child of parents who follow the Three Refuges and avoid evil actions, is equal in virtue to his parents, such a child is described as being similar in quality (anujata).

If the son of parents who follow the Three Refuges and avoid the five-fold evil actions is unvirtuous, he is described as avajata (inferior in quality and virtue). Wise people like those children who are of higher virtue (atijata) than themselves and those who are of identical qualities as themselves (anujata). But, they dislike children who are inferior in quality to themselves (avajata). The child of inferior quality destroys the family.

It is a great gain to have a child. The eye is a very valuable organ to man. But, of what use is the blind eye? It troubles the owner immensely. In the same way, the bad child is of no use. It brings about suffering to friends and relations. Therefore, it is better to be without children rather than having a bad child. Therefore, the wise prefer atijata (of higher quality) children and anujata children (those similar in quality to the parents). They dislike children of inferior quality (avajata). The inferior children bring about the decay and destruction of the family and the clan. Such children are demons who bring disrepute to the parents. Therefore, wise people describe the unvirtuous child as an unborn child and children of higher and equal virtue as children who are really born.



If, due to a child, his village, his province, his country, his religion, and his nation acquire a shine, he is truly a well-born child. On the contrary, if he is unvirtuous and bad, he is not a real, true son. He is described as a demon destroying the youth of his mother. Such a bad child is also described as an axe to the sandal wood forest of a mother's youth. Alagiyawanna, an ancient poet of Sri Lanka, has this to say, "One may have a hundred children who lack merit. They all are of no use. But, the one child who is blessed with virtue and wisdom, is the best of all. He is higher than all those hundred children. The one moon dispels the darkness of the world. But, a multitude of stars cannot do that." Wise people say that a tree growing by the side of a road is better than a bad son, who is described as an unborn child. In consequence, wise parents expect only good and virtuous children. In such a situation, to have children is a great blessing. But to have unvirtuous, bad children is a misery worse than not having children at all.

Bringing up children is a great responsibility. It has to be done with great care and great wisdom. In some instances, a child becomes capable of doing good during this birth and acquiring merit for the benefit of his next birth. He proves to be of use to his family, his village, his province, his country, his nation, his religion and to his parents.

Some other child may prove a nuisance to his parents, and a nuisance to his relations, to his friends, to his family, to his village, to his country, to his religion and to his nation. His bad behaviour makes him useless both here and hereafter. Both these categories of children result from the manner they are brought up by their parents. Therefore, the responsibility of bringing up children rests with parents alone. If parents desire to bring up children to make them worthy people, to desire sound support from them and to savour the satisfaction of having brought up children, they must then train them from childhood on, in virtuous habits. They should be given an education and a training in arts and crafts. They should be made to have a feeling for religion and for their country. They should be brought up extremely well. The special benefit parents expect from their children is getting the children to look after them when they grow old. But today, most parents do not desire that benefit from their children. They suffer, finding fault with their children.

Conduct

If children neglect their old parents, it is a grave crime. In most instances, the children commit that crime because the parents did not train the children in virtuous conduct. They were not taught the value of virtuous life. Those parents made them empty people by not giving them an education that will enable them to understand the value of virtuous behaviour.

The child who has been brought up by the parents to become disciplined and virtuous will know the value and the greatness of parents. Such children know their duty. They know good and bad. Therefore they will never neglect their parents. They will always look after their parents according to their ability. Bringing up children to be sinners, without training them in virtuous behaviour is a harm done to children. And, it is also a harm done to themselves by the parents. It is also a harm to one's family, relations, friends, one's village, one's country and to one's religion.

Those parents who bring up children badly, become enemies of their own children. Parents must know quite well, the duties they must perform towards their children to make them good.

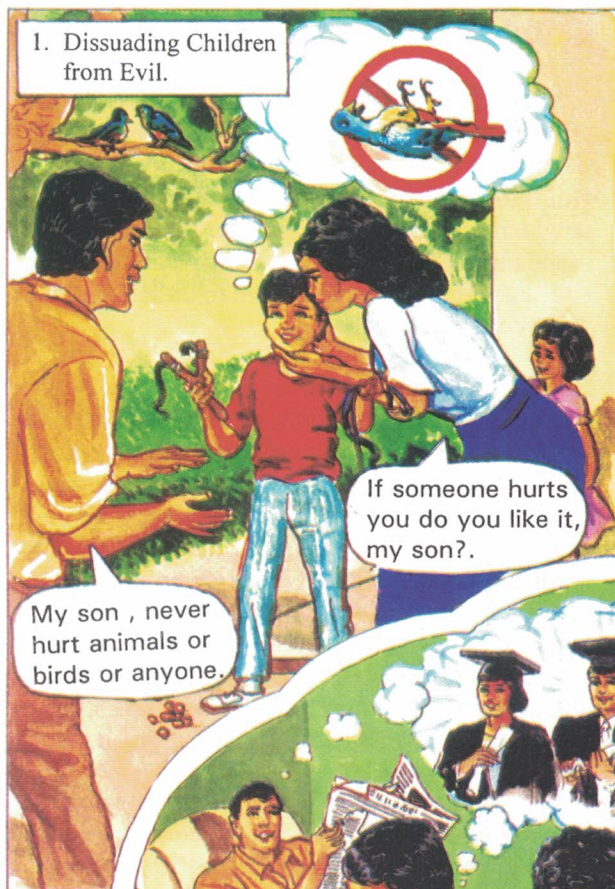
Five Duties of Parents

In all human communities, there are conventions about how parents should behave towards their children. Some of these conventions are not written down. They are practised in terms of the traditions prevailing in a given community. In the Buddhist system, the duties of parents towards their children are clearly articulated. They are five in number. These five duties are:

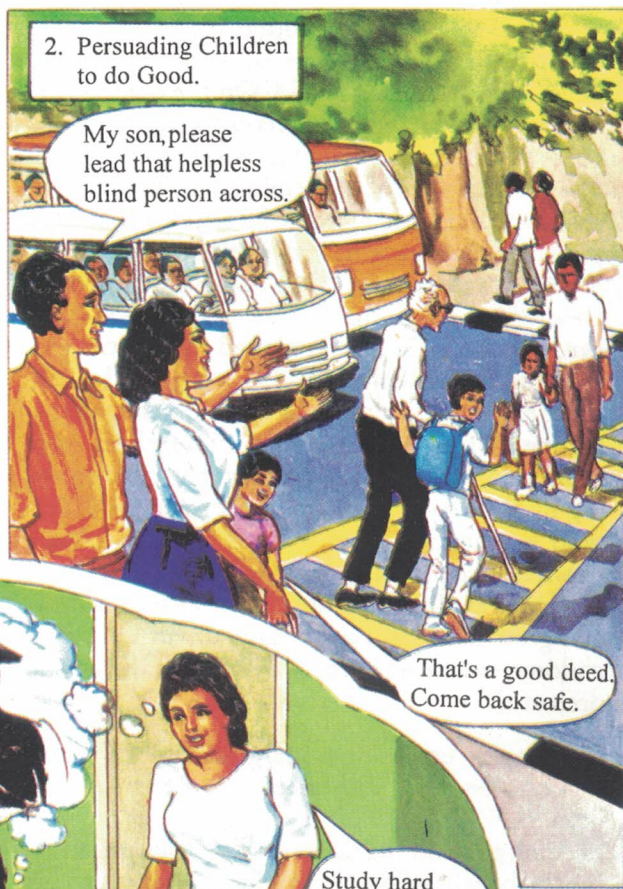
1. Dissuading Children from Evil.

It is the primary duty of the parents to see that the children grow up with an aversion to evil. For this the parents must be perpetually alert to how the children behave. In the modern age, parents, especially in urban centres, have very little time for their children. In consequence they are likely to acquire evil habits. If parents do not have time to see that the children refrain from evil, they must at least get the guidance of either religious teachers or secular teachers in this matter.

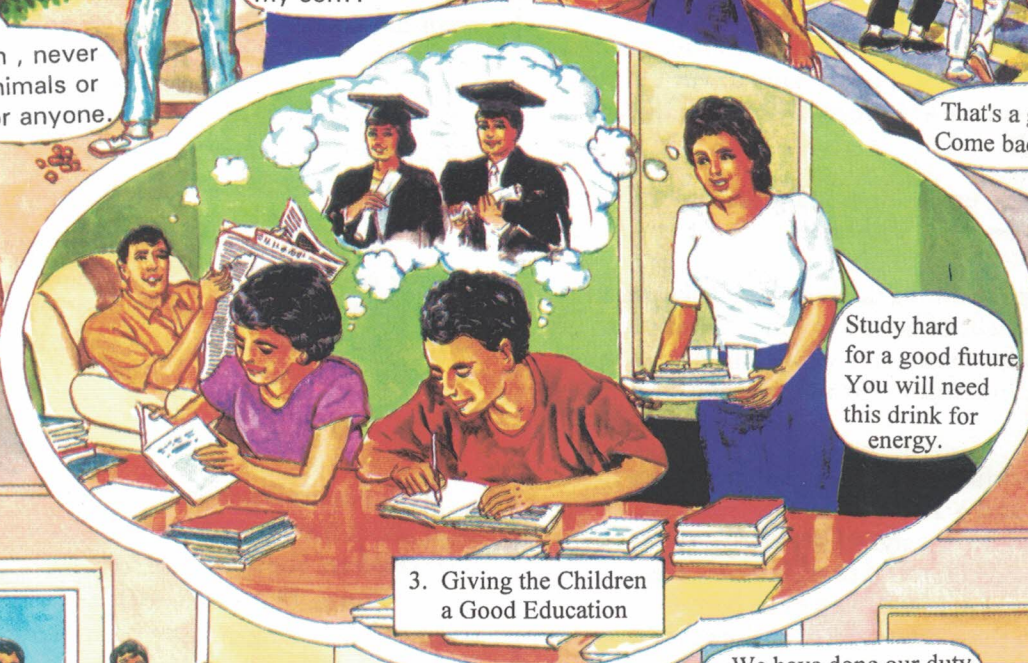
1. Dissuading Children from Evil.



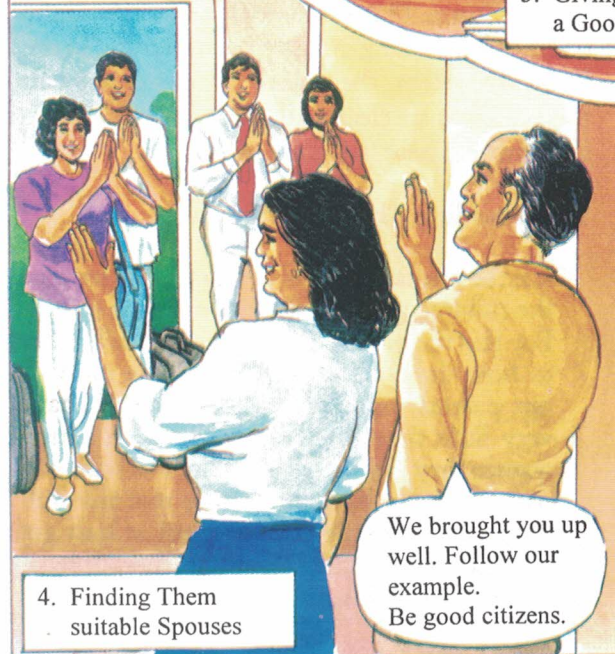
2. Persuading Children to do Good.



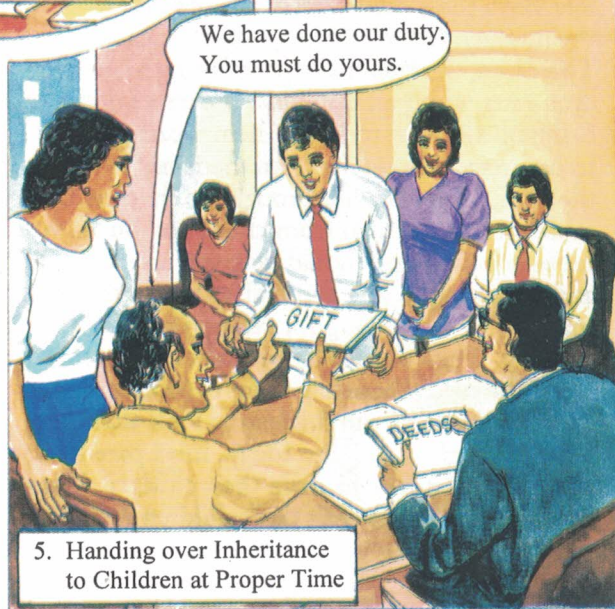
3. Giving the Children a Good Education



4. Finding Them suitable Spouses



5. Handing over Inheritance to Children at Proper Time



2. Persuading Children to do Good.

The best way in which children could be persuaded to do good things is by setting them an example. Parents must, on all reasons, lead their lives in terms of what is good and what is virtuous. If children were to be guided by such evil activities of their parents as lying or smoking, only the parents themselves are to be blamed for it. In the Buddhist system, parents are advised to see to it that children observed the five precepts.

3. Giving the Children a Good Education.

The greatest gift parents can give a child is, of course, a good education. If the child is to grow into wholesome, respectable adulthood, he needs a good education. Parents and teachers cannot go along with the child wherever he goes. Therefore the parents must give him a sound education to enable the child to meet any situation wisely, and through independent judgement.

4. Giving Them in Marriage to Suitable Individuals.

It is the duty of parents to see that their children get the right marriage partners. Even in the modern world this parental duty is very much needed. This is because if the children rushed headlong into marriage without any guidance they are likely to come to grief.

5. Handing over the Inheritance to the Children at the proper time.

This duty is quite important. If parents passed away without handing over to children the inheritance they should get, problems arise. Children are likely to quarrel. More than that, if the inheritance is handed over when parents are alive, the children can use it wisely, investing it properly and profitably. The inheritance should be given when it is very much needed - when children settle down, for instance.

Five Duties of Children

In most instances, children seem to think that they have a right to be looked after by their parents. They do not seem to appreciate that they too have duties towards their parents. Buddhist Teachings have identified five major duties that children should perform towards their parents. These are:

1. Supporting the parents.

Once children grow up, it is their duty to look after their parents who brought them into this world. Some children do not recognize their duty even when they are affluent and can very well afford to support their parents. Parents wasted their youth and whatever wealth they had to bring up their children. Some parents become poor and helpless in this effort to bring up the children. Therefore, it is not only a secular duty but even a moral and spiritual duty to support one's parents.

2. Performing the necessary duties.

Children must make a special effort to find out what is expected of them and must do it to the satisfaction of their parents. To children, what is of utmost priority is the comfort and happiness of their parents. This gives a meaning to their lives. The duties that should be performed for the well-being of the parents, are not only secular. They include spiritual duties as well. The children must strive to inculcate spiritual joy in the parents by taking them on pilgrimage, etc.

3. Keeping the family lineage.

It is an important duty of the children to look after the ancestral inheritance without wasting it. It is very essential that the children pay heed to this duty. Most parents accumulate wealth through a great effort. The children who are not aware of the effort made by their parents, squander their inheritance. Therefore it is very essential that the children perform this duty.

4. Honouring the name of their Parents.

The duty of children is to behave in such a way that they do not blemish the name of their parents. Some children forget their duty and do things that will discredit the parents.

5. Performing meritorious actions in the name of departed Parents.

After parents are gone, it is the duty of the children to perform meritorious activities in memory of their departed parents. This duty will enable children to show their gratitude to their parents, even after they are departed.





Buddhist View

*The Downfall of man is brought
about by a complexity of causes.
The Buddha - the Enlightened One,
has indicated the conditions that result
in the decline of men.*

*In the following pages some
of the major causes of man's downfall
are graphically presented.*

*They are true for
anyone, anytime, anywhere.*



Causes of Man's Downfall

*“Parābhavantam purisam
Mayam pucchāma, Gotamam,
Bhagavantam putthum-āgamma
Kim parābhavato mukham?”*

“(Who is) the ruining man?
We ask you, O Gotama.
We have come to the Lord to ask:
What is the cause (of ruin) of the ruining man?”



*“Suvijāno bhavam hoti,
Suvijano parābhavo;
Dhammakāmo bhavam hoti-
Dhammadessī parābhavo.”*

“The prospering man is easily known,
Ruin too is easily known;
The prospering man likes righteousness-
The one who hates righteousness (is in) ruin.”





Those who are given to unlimited talkativeness.

Talkativeness can bring about many evil results. In the first place, a talkative person wastes away precious time. When his time is wasted on unproductive talking, he has no time for any profitable activity. When hours are spent on debates that do not matter much, it is likely to cause anger in some people. Listeners get offended by such irresponsible talks. These talkative persons waste not only their time but time of others. Therefore, talkativeness is a source of downfall.



*“Asant’assa piyā honti;
Sante na kurute piyam;
Asatam dhammam roceti-
Tam parābhavato mukham.”*

“The bad are dear to him;
He does not take delight in the good;
He likes the doctrine of the bad-
That is the cause (of ruin) of the ruining man.”





Those who are attracted to vice and to the company of vicious and depraved people.

There are some people in this world who are endlessly fascinated with what is bad and ugly. Such unacceptable activities are taking intoxicated drinks, gambling and seeking the excessive company of women. They avoid people who can lead them to good. This deep desire for what is wicked is a cause of downfall.



*“Niddāsili, sabhāsili,
Anutthātā ca yo naro;
Alaso, kodhapaññāno-
Tam parābhavato mukham.”*

“Fond of sleep, fond of company,
That man is unenergetic,
He is lazy, his distinct sign is anger-
That is the cause (of ruin) of the ruining man.”





The lazy, inactive person given only to enjoyment.

If a person is lazy, inactive and if he does not make an effort to do good, he cannot win any goal that is wholesome. He will always aim at narrow, worthless achievements. He will not reach anything that is noble.

Such a person, who cannot rise to important heights,
is on his way to downfall.



*“Yo, mātaram vā pītaramvā
Jinnakam, gatayobbanam,
Pahusanto, na bharati-
Tam parābhavato mukham”*

“He who, the mother or the father,
Grown old, youth gone,
Having much, does not look after-
That is the cause (of ruin) of the ruining man.”





Neglecting one's parents, even when one is capable of supporting them.

Parents bring up their children with love and affection. The parents look after their children as their own lives. But, some children when they grow up into adulthood, neglect their parents, who gave them life. There are some sons and daughters who grossly neglect their parents, even when they can easily afford to support their mother and father. Neglecting parents this way is a cause of downfall.



*“Yo, brāhmanam vā samanam vā,
Aññam vā’pi vanibbakam,
Musāvādena vañceti-
Tam parābhavato mukham.”*

“He who, a brāhmana or a recluse,
Or another wayfarer,
Deceives through untruth -
That is the cause (of ruin) of the ruining man.”





Cheating people out of their money, through fraud.

Human society is built mainly upon trust. In very many activities of man, people have to trust each other. If some people are deceitful this mutual trust will shatter. Getting along in society becomes difficult if people begin to cheat. When such frauds take place, human activity cannot be conducted well. People who cheat live in fear and suspicion. Therefore frauds and deceptions are a cause of downfall.



*“Pahūtavitto, puriso,
Sahirañño, sabhojano,
Eko bhuñjati sādūni
Tam parābhavato mukham.”*

“With much wealth a man,
With gold (i.e. plenty of money) with food,
Alone eats sweetmeats-
That is the cause (of ruin) of the ruining man.”





Eating and drinking without sharing, although one is very rich.

Rich people have all the things they need. They have good food. They can have all the delicacies they want. This is not all. They have the money to acquire anything they want. As they have sufficient wealth they can afford to share with those who do not have. But, they enjoy food and drinks with no regard for those in dire need.

This disregard of those in dire need, is a cause of downfall.



*“Jātitthaddho, dhanatthaddho,
Gottatthaddho ca yo naro,
Saññātim atimaññeti -
Tam parābhavato mukham.”*

“Obdurate about race, obdurate about wealth,
That man, also obdurate about tribe,
Despises his own relatives-
That is the cause (of ruin) of the ruining man.”





Those proud people who do not care for poor relatives.

Some people become very proud because of their race, clan and birth. They become proud because of their wealth as well. In their pride they do not have a regard for their relatives. Those poor relatives become a problem for them. They do not belong in their society - they think. Therefore they ignore their poor relatives.
The neglect of the poor relatives by rich is a cause of downfall.



*“Itthidhutto, surādhutto,
akkhadhutto ca yo naro,
Laddham laddham vīnāseti
Tam parābhavato mukham.”*

“Womanizer, drunkard,
That man is also a gambler,
(Such a man) destroys whatever he gets-
That is the cause (of ruin) of the ruining man”





Wasting whatever one has, through wicked activity.

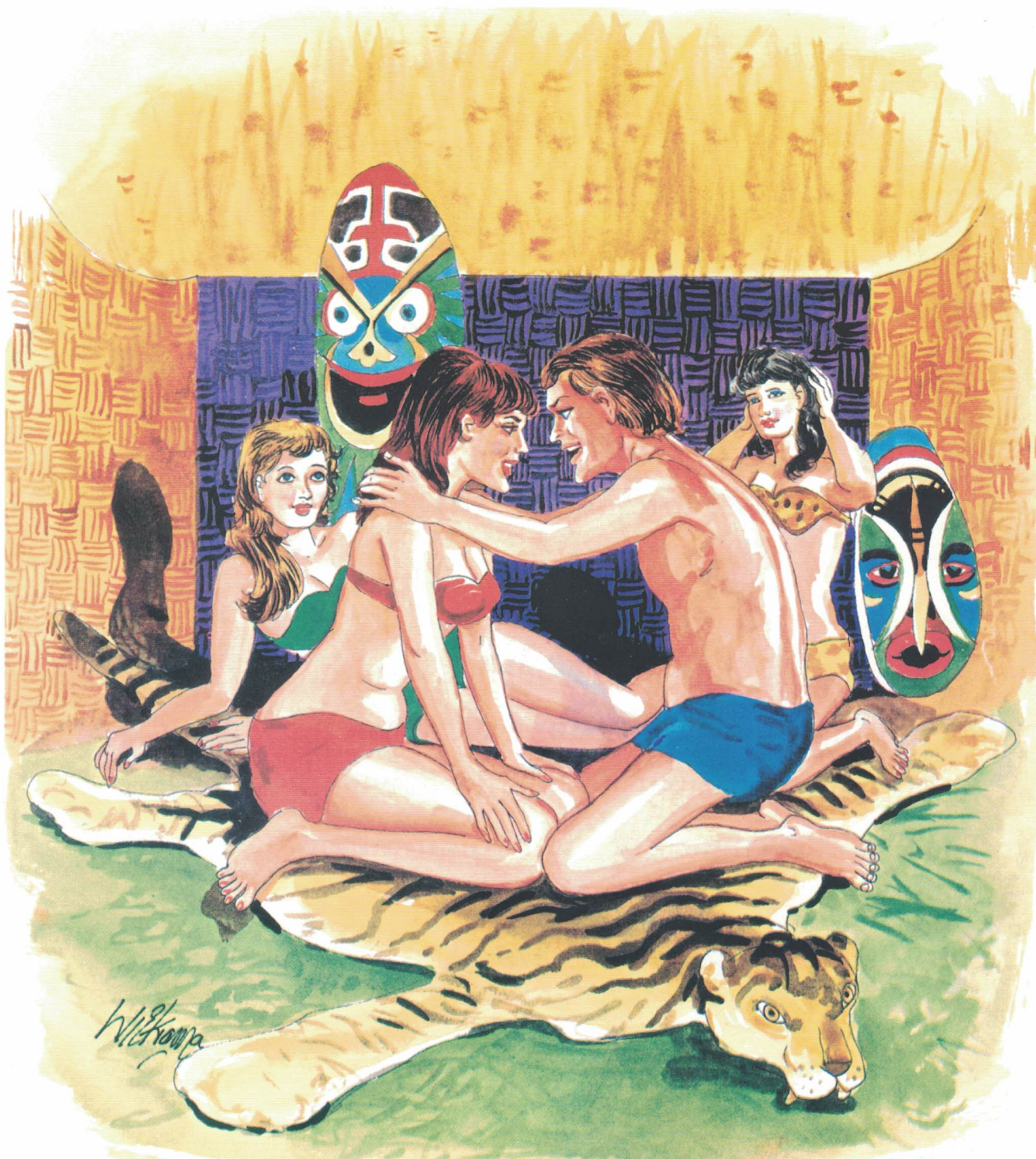
Some people can think only about things that bring about bad results. Whenever they get some money, they think about intoxicating drinks, company of women, and gambling. They waste their money through such bad activity. Wasting wealth this way, by drinking, gambling and keeping the company of women, is a cause for downfall.



*“Sehi dārehi’santuttho
Vesiyāsu padissati;
Dissati paradāresu-
Tam parābhavato mukham.”*

“Dissatisfied with his wife
He is seen among courtesans;
He is seen among others’ wives-
That is the cause (of ruin) of the ruining man.”





Not happy with one's wife, some people seek the company of prostitutes and wives of other people.

Some people cannot live happily with their own wife. That kind of person tends to seek the company of prostitutes or the wives of other people. They go about seeking pleasure whenever they can. This habit of seeking the company of prostitutes and the wives of other people, is a source of downfall.



*“Atīṭayobbano poso,
Āneti timbarutthanim,
Tassā Issā na supati-
Tam parābhavato mukham.”*

“A man gone beyond youth,
Brings a beautiful and very young girl.
Through jealousy of her he does not sleep-
That is the cause (of ruin) of the ruining man.”





Man past prime of youth, brings home a young wife.

The man is no longer young. But, because of his deep desire he brings home a young woman, as his wife. She is quite attractive and is full-breasted. The young wife does not find the company of her husband satisfying. The aging husband, suspects that his young wife might seek pleasure elsewhere. Because of these jealous thoughts, he cannot sleep well at night. This is a situation that leads to one's downfall.



*"Itthim, sondim, vikiranim,
Purisam vā'pi tādīsam,
Issariyasmim thapāpeti
Tam parābhavato mukham."*

"A woman, addicted to drink, squandering,
Or a man of similar sort,
One appoints to be in charge of his wealth-
That is the cause (of ruin) of the ruining man."





Wasting the wealth inherited from ancestors.

In some instances, people inherit wealth from the ancestors. Those ancestors took a long time to collect this wealth. They took a tremendous lot of trouble to amass their wealth. They protected this wealth carefully. But, the foolish people who inherit such vast wealth do not know the trouble their ancestors took. Therefore they waste the wealth irresponsibly. Wasting away of wealth is a source of downfall.



*“Appabhogo mahātanho,
Khattiye jāyate kule,
So ca rajjam patthayati
Tam parābhavato mukham.”*

“With little wealth (but) with great craving,
One is born in the royal clan,
And he desires kingship-
That is the cause (of ruin) of the ruining man.”





Those who are caught up in the habit of gambling.

The gambler never succeeds in life. He gambles away everything he has. He always thinks that tomorrow will bring better luck. Tomorrow comes but no luck. This way, he leads a miserable life everyday. His indebtedness grows, hand in hand with gambling. The gambler is caught up in a vicious circle. He can never escape it. Gambling, therefore, is a source of downfall.



*“Ete parābhava, loke,
Pandito, samavekkhiya,
Ariyo dassanasampanno,
Sa lokam bhajate sivam.”*

“In this world, these ruins
A wise man, having considered,
The noble man, possessed of insight
He associates the safe world.”





Living a life full of anger and irritation.

For people to be together well, pleasantness and good understanding should be there. In a family group this kind of understanding is very essential for home-life to be happy for everyone. If the mother or father is always angry, irritated, the home becomes a very unhappy place. Therefore, anger in home-life is certainly a cause of downfall.





The greed people have for intoxicating drinks.

People who have a deep desire for drinking cannot work properly either at home or in public life. Because they cannot do their job properly, they are disliked in the work place. At home, members of the family are unhappy as the drunkards cannot look after their wives and children. Drunkards are disliked by people as they are a nuisance. This way, the habit of taking intoxicating drinks is a source of downfall.





Shameless, indecent behaviour.

If a person behaves in an indecent manner and is shameless, it is quite unpleasant.

In the lives of people, shame and fear must be present at the right time.

If these are not there, man cannot behave in a cultured manner.

People of such indecent behaviour are disliked by many.

Therefore, shameless, indecent behaviour is a
cause of downfall.





Using wicked methods due to anger and jealousy.

Anger, jealousy and excessive greed can make people behave in the most wicked and violent manner. When they are driven by anger, jealousy and greed they can do any bad action. They forget to behave like good human beings. They will do any bad thing. Therefore, anger, jealousy and greed are a sure source of downfall.



At the request of a Deity,
the Buddha enumerated these causes
of men's downfall. These roots of human
ruin possess the power to bring about the downfall
of men even in our day. Therefore, these are teachings
that the moderns, who are keen to lead
a worthwhile life, should
duly pay heed to.





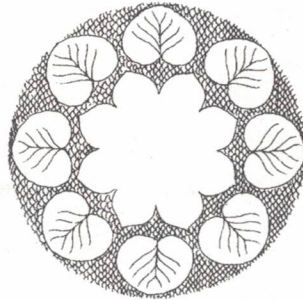
Atthalokadhamma

(Eight Worldly Conditions)

Lābhō Alābhō, Ayasō Yasōca
Nindā Pasamsāca, Sukhamca Dukkham
Ete Aniccā, Manujesu Dhammā
Masoca Kim, Socaci Photthapāda?

*Profit and Loss, Fame and Defame
Insult and Praise, Happiness and Pain
are all phenomena to which
impermanent human life is subjected to.
Therefore, why do you weep about such
vicissitudes of life, O Photthapāda?*





Eight Worldly Conditions





ATTHALOKADHAMMA - EIGHT WORLDLY CONDITIONS

Life has discrepancies. The fortunes of men and women fluctuate from time to time. Life has its ups and downs.

The passage of life is very much like the turning of a wheel. At one point, a given part of the wheel will be on top. But, as it turns, the part that was on top will come down and touch the road. It progresses that way. Human life too goes through those changes. Life swings like a pendulum. Those who lack wisdom become flustered by these fluctuations and swings. But the wise take all these changes with equanimity. These remain with mind unshaken.

Understanding these changes and fluctuations that affect man will make people wise. They will be able to face life's ups and downs calmly and with a tranquil, unruffled mind. These eight main changes that affect man are discussed in the pages that ensue.

ATTHALOKADHAMMA

This ill-balanced world is not absolutely rosy. Nor is it totally thorny. The rose is soft, beautiful and fragrant. But the stem on which it grows is full of thorns. What is rosy is rosy; what is thorny is thorny. Because of the rose one will not meddle with the thorns, nor will one disparage the rose on account of the thorns.

To an optimist this world is absolutely rosy; to a pessimist this world is absolutely thorny. But to a realist this world is neither absolutely rosy nor absolutely thorny. It abounds with beautiful roses and prickly thorns as well, from a realistic standpoint.

An understanding person will not be infatuated by the beauty of the rose but will view it as it is. Knowing well the nature of the thorns, he will view them as they are and will take the precaution not to be wounded. Like the pendulum that perpetually turns to the right and left, eight desirable and undesirable conditions prevail in this world, which everyone, without exception, must perforce face in the course of one's lifetime.

They are gain (labha) and loss (alabha), fame (yasa) and defame (ayasa), praise (pasamsa) and blame (ninda), happiness (sukha) and pain (dukkha).

GAIN AND LOSS

Gain

Business men, as a rule, are subject to both gain and loss. It is quite natural to be complacent in obtaining a gain or a profit. In itself there is nothing wrong. Such righteous or unrighteous profits produce some pleasure which average men seek. Without pleasurable moments, though temporary, life would not be worth living. In this competitive and chaotic world rarely do people enjoy some kind of happiness which gladdens their hearts. Such happiness, though materialistic, does conduce to health and longevity.

The problem arises in case of loss. Profits one can bear smilingly but not so the losses. More often than not they lead to mental derangement



and sometimes to suicide when the losses are unbearable. It is under such adverse circumstances that one should exhibit moral courage and maintain a balanced mind. All have ups and downs while battling with life. One should always be prepared for the losses in particular. Then there will be less disappointment.

When something is stolen naturally one feels sad. But by becoming sad one would not be able to retrieve the loss. One should think that someone had benefited thereby, though unrighteously. May he be well and happy! Or one can console oneself thinking, "It's only a minor loss." One may even adopt a highly philosophical attitude. "There is nothing to be called Me or Mine."

In the time of the Buddha, once a noble lady was offering food to the Venerable Sariputta and some monks. While serving them she received a note stating that her husband and all her sons who had gone to settle a dispute were waylaid and killed. Without getting upset, calmly she kept the note in her waist-pouch and served the monks as if nothing had happened. A maid, who was carrying a pot of ghee to offer to the monks, inadvertently slipped and broke the pot of ghee. Thinking that the lady would naturally feel sorry over the loss, Venerable Sariputta consoled her, saying that all breakable things are bound to break. The wise lady unperturbed remarked, "Bhante, what is this trivial loss?" Such valour on the part of courageous women is highly commendable.

Loss

Once the Buddha went seeking alms in a village. Owing to the intervention of Mara the Evil One, the Buddha did not obtain any food. When Mara questioned the Buddha rather sarcastically whether he was hungry or not, the Buddha solemnly explained the mental attitude of those who are free from impediments, and replied: "Ah, happily do we live, we who have no impediments. Feeders of joy shall we be, even as the gods of the radiant realm." On another occasion the Buddha and his disciples observed *vassa* (rainy period) in a village, at the invitation

of a brahmin, who, however, completely forgot his duty to attend to the needs of the Buddha and the Sangha. Throughout a period of three months, although Venerable Moggallana volunteered to obtain food by his psychic powers, the Buddha, making no complaint, was content with the fodder of horses offered by a horse-dealer.

Visakha, the Buddha's chief female lay disciple, used to frequent the monastery to attend to the needs of the Buddha and the Sangha, decked with a very valuable outer garment. On entering the monastery, she used to remove it and give it to the maid for safe custody. Once the maid inadvertently left it in the temple and returned home. Venerable Ananda, noticing it, kept it in a safe place to be given to Visakha when she visited the monastery. Visakha, discovering the loss, advised the maid to look for it but not to take it back in case any Bhikkhu had touched it. On inquiry the maid understood that Venerable Ananda had kept it in safe custody. Returning home, she reported the matter. Visakha visited the monastery and inquired of the Buddha what meritorious act she should perform with the money obtained by selling the costly garment. The Buddha advised her to build a monastery for the benefit of the Sangha. As there was nobody to buy the garment because of its high cost, she herself bought it and built a monastery and offered it to the Sangha. After the offering she expressed her gratitude to the maid, saying, "If you had not inadvertently left my garment, I would not have got an opportunity to perform this meritorious act. Please share the merit."

Instead of grieving over the temporary loss and reprimanding the maid for her carelessness, she thanked her for granting an opportunity for service. The exemplary attitude of cultured Visakha is a memorable lesson to all those who are quickly irritated over the misdoings of helpless servants. Losses one must try to bear cheerfully with manly vigour. Unexpectedly one confronts them, very often in groups and not singly. One must face them with equanimity (*upekkha*) and think it is an opportunity to practise that sublime virtue.



FAME AND DEFAME

Fame

Fame and defame are another pair of inevitable worldly conditions that confront us in the course of our daily lives. Fame we welcome, defame we dislike. Fame gladdens our mind, defame disheartens us. We desire to become famous. We long to see our names and pictures appear in the papers. We are greatly pleased when our activities, however insignificant, are given publicity. Sometimes we seek undue publicity too.

To see their picture in a magazine some are ready to pay any amount. To obtain an honour some are prepared to offer any bribe or give a fat donation to the party in power. For the sake of publicity some exhibit their generosity by giving alms to one hundred monks and even more, but they may be totally indifferent to the sufferings of the poor and the needy in the neighbourhood. One may charge and punish a starving person who, to appease his hunger, were to steal a coconut in his garden, but would not hesitate to present a thousand coconuts to get a good name.

These are human frailties. Most people do even a good action with an ulterior motive. Selfless persons who act disinterestedly are rare in this world. Even if the motive is not very praiseworthy, those who do any good are to be congratulated on having done a beneficial act. Most worldlings have something up their sleeves. Well, who is 100% good? How many are perfectly pure in their motives? How many are absolutely altruistic? We need not hunt after fame. It will come to us unsought.

The bee will be attracted to the flower, laden with honey. The flower, however, does not invite the bee. True indeed, we feel naturally happy, nay, extremely happy, when our fame is spread far and wide. But we must realize that fame, honour and glory only lead to the grave. They vanish in thin air. Empty words are they, though pleasing to the ear. What about defame? It is not palatable either to the ear or mind. We are undoubtedly perturbed when unkind de-

famatory words pierce our ears. The pain of mind is still greater when the so-called report is unjust and absolutely false.

Normally it takes years to erect a magnificent building. In a minute or two, with modern devastating weapons, it could easily be demolished. Sometimes it takes years or a lifetime to build up a good reputation. In no long time the hard-earned good name can be ruined. Nobody is exempt from the devastating remark beginning with the infamous "but". Yes, he is very good, he does this and that, but his whole good record is blackened by the so-called "but". You may live the life of a Buddha, but you will not be exempt from criticism, attacks and insults.

The Buddha was the most famous and the most maligned religious teacher in His time. Great men are often not known; even if they are known, they are misknown. Some antagonists of the Buddha spread a rumour that a woman used to spend the night in the monastery. Foiled in this base attempt, they spread a false rumour amongst the populace that the Buddha and His disciples murdered that very woman and hid her corpse in the rubbish-heap of withered flowers within the monastery. When His historic mission met with success and when many sought ordination under Him, His adversaries maligned Him, saying that He was robbing the mothers of their sons, depriving wives of their husbands, and that He was obstructing the progress of the nation.

Failing in all these attempts to ruin His noble character, His own cousin and a jealous disciple of his, attempted to kill Him by hurling a rock from above. Being a Buddha, He could not be killed. If such be the sad fate of faultless, pure Buddhas, what can be the state of ordinary mortals?

The higher you climb a hill, the more conspicuous you become and much smaller in the eyes of others. Your back is revealed but your front is hidden. The fault-finding world exhibits your shortcomings and misdoings but hides your salient virtues. The winnowing fan ejects the husks but retains the grains: the strainer, on the contrary, retains the gross remnants but drains out the sweet juice. The cultured take the sub-

tle and remove the gross; the uncultured retain the gross and reject the subtle.

Defame

When you are misrepresented, deliberately or undeliberately unjustly reported, as Epictetus advises, it is wise to think or say, "O by his slight acquaintanceship and little knowledge of myself I am slightly criticised. But if I am known better, more serious and much greater would be the accusations against me."

It is needless to waste time in correcting the false reports unless circumstances allow you to offer a clarification. The enemy is gratified when he sees that you are hurt. This is what he actually expects. If you are indifferent, such misrepresentations will fall on deaf ears. In seeing the faults of others, we should behave like a blind person. In hearing unjust criticism of others, we should behave like a deaf person. In speaking ill of others, we should behave like a dumb person.

It is not possible to put a stop to false accusations, reports and rumours. The world is full of thorns and pebbles. It is impossible to remove them. But if we have to walk in spite of such obstacles, instead of trying to remove them, which is impossible, it is advisable to wear a pair of slippers and walk harmlessly.

The Dhamma teaches:

Be like a lion that trembles not at sounds.

Be like the wind that does not cling to the meshes of a net.

Be like a lotus that is not contaminated by the mud from which it springs up.

Wander alone like a rhinoceros.

Being the king of the forest, lions are fearless. By nature they are not frightened by the roaring of other animals. In this world we may hear adverse reports, false accusations, degrading remarks of uncurbed tongues. Like a lion, we should not even listen to them. Like the boomerang they will end where they began. Dogs bark, caravans peacefully move on. We are living in a muddy world. Numerous are the lo-

tuses that spring therefrom. Without being contaminated by the mud, they adorn the world. Like a lotus we should try to lead blameless noble lives unmindful of the mud that may be thrown at us.

We should expect mud to be thrown at us instead of roses. Then there will be no disappointment. Though difficult we should try to cultivate nonattachment. Alone we come, alone we go. Nonattachment is happiness in this world. Unmindful of the poisonous darts of uncurbed tongues, alone we would wander serving others to the best of our ability.

It is rather strange that great men have been slandered, vilified, poisoned, crucified, or shot. Great Socrates was poisoned. Noble Jesus Christ was ruthlessly crucified. Harmless Mahatma Gandhi was shot. Well, is it dangerous to be too good?

Yes, during their lifetime they are criticised, attacked and killed. After death they are deified and honoured. Great men are indifferent to fame or defame. They are not upset when they are criticised or maligned, for they work not for fame or name. They are indifferent whether others recognise their services or not. "To work they have the right but not to the fruit thereof."

PRAISE AND BLAME

Praise

Praise and blame are two more worldly conditions that affect mankind. It is natural to be elated when praised and to be depressed when blamed. Amidst praise and blame, the Buddha says, the wise do not exhibit either elation or depression. Like a solid rock that is not shaken by the wind they remain unmoved. Praise, if worthy, is pleasing to the ears; if unworthy, as in the case of flattery, though pleasing, it is deceptive. But they are all sounds which have no effect if they do not reach our ears.

The cultured do not resort to flattery nor do they wish to be flattered by others. The praiseworthy they praise without any jealousy. The



blameworthy they blame, not contemptuously but out of compassion, with the object of reforming them. Great men are highly praised by the great and small who know them well, though they are utterly indifferent to such praise.

Many who knew the Buddha intimately, extolled the virtues of the Buddha in their own way. One Upali, a millionaire, a new convert, praised the Buddha, enumerating a hundred virtues extempore. Nine sterling virtues of the Buddha that were current in His time are still being recited by His followers, looking at His image. They are a subject of meditation to the devout. Those well-merited virtues are still a great inspiration to His followers.

The Buddha says: "They who speak much are blamed. They who speak a little are blamed. They who are silent are also blamed. In this world there is none who is not blamed."

Blame seems to be a universal legacy to mankind. "The majority of the people in the world," remarks the Buddha, "are ill-disciplined. Like an elephant in the battlefield that endures all arrows shot at him, even so do I suffer all insults."

The deluded and the wicked are prone to seek only the ugliness in others, but not the goodness and beauty. None, except the Buddha, is one hundred percent good. Nobody is one hundred percent bad either. There is evil in the best of us. There is good in the worst of us. "He who silences himself like a cracked gong when attacked insulted and abused he, I say," the Buddha exhorts, "is in the presence of Nibbana although he has not yet attained Nibbana."

One may work with the best of motives. But the outside world very often misconstrues him and will impute motives never even dreamt of. One may serve and help others to the best of one's ability, sometimes by incurring debt or selling one's articles or property to save a friend in trouble. But later, the deluded world is so constituted that those very persons whom one has helped will find fault with him, blackmail him, blemish his good character and will rejoice in his downfall. In the Jataka stories it is stated

that Guttala the musician taught everything he knew to his pupil, without a closed fist, but the ungrateful man he was, he unsuccessfully tried to compete with his teacher and ruin him.

Blame

Devadatta, a pupil and cousin of the Buddha, who had developed psychic powers, not only tried to discredit the Buddha but also made an unsuccessful attempt to crush him to death by hurling a rock from above while he was pacing up and down below.

There was no religious teacher so highly praised and so severely criticised, reviled and blamed as the Buddha. Such is the fate of great men.

In a public assembly a vile woman named Cinca feigning pregnancy maligned the Buddha. With a smiling face the Buddha patiently endured the insult and the Buddha's innocence was proved. The Buddha was accused of murdering a woman, assisted by his disciples. Non-Buddhists severely criticised the Buddha and his disciples to such an extent that the Venerable Ananda appealed to the Buddha to leave for another village.

"How, Ananda, if those villagers also abuse us?"

"Then, Ananda, the whole of India will have no place for us. Be patient. These abuses will automatically cease."

Magandiya, a lady of the harem, had a grudge against the Buddha for speaking ill of her attractive figure when her father, through ignorance, wished to give her in marriage to the Buddha. She hired drunkards to insult the Buddha in public. With perfect equanimity the Buddha endured the insults. But Magandiya had to suffer for her misdemeanour. Insults are the common lot of humanity. The more you work and the greater you become, the more are you subject to insult and humiliation. Jesus Christ was insulted, humiliated and crucified.

Socrates was insulted by his own wife. Whenever he went out to help others his intolerant wife used to scold him. One day as she was unwell she failed to perform her unruly task. Socrates left home on that day with a sad face. His friends inquired why he was sad. He replied that his wife did not scold him on that day as she was unwell.

"Well, you ought to be happy for not getting that unwelcome scolding", remarked his friends.

"Oh no! When she scolds me I get an opportunity to practise patience. Today I missed it. That is the reason why I am sad." answered the philosopher. These are memorable lessons for all. When insulted we should think that we are given an opportunity to practise patience. Instead of being offended, we should be grateful to our adversaries.

HAPPINESS AND PAIN

Happiness

Happiness and pain are the last pair of opposites. They are the most powerful factors that affect mankind. What can be endured with ease is *sukha* (happiness) what is difficult to bear is *dukkha* (pain). Ordinary happiness is the gratification of a desire. No sooner is the desired thing gained than we desire some other kind of happiness. So insatiate are our selfish desires. The enjoyment of sensual pleasures is the highest and only happiness to an average person. There is no doubt a momentary happiness in the anticipation, gratification and recollection of such material pleasures highly prized by the sensualist, but they are illusory and temporary.

Can material possessions give one genuine happiness? If so, millionaires would not think of committing suicide. In a certain country which has reached the zenith of material progress about ten percent suffer from mental diseases. Why should it be so if material possessions alone can give genuine happiness? Can dominion over the whole world produce true happiness? Alexander, who triumphantly marched to India, con-

quering the lands on the way, sighed for not having more pieces of earth to conquer. Are Emperors and Kings who wear crowns always happy? Very often the lives of statesmen who wield power are at stake. The pathetic cases of Mahatma Gandhi and Kennedy are illustrative examples. Real happiness is found within and is not to be defined in terms of wealth, power, honours or conquests. If such worldly possessions are forcibly or unjustly obtained, or are misdirected, or even viewed with attachment, they will be a source of pain and sorrow for the possessors. What is happiness to one may not be happiness to another. What is meat and drink to one may be poison to another.

The Buddha enumerates four kinds of happiness for a layman. They are the happiness of possession; namely, health, wealth, longevity, beauty, joy, property, strength, children, etc. The second source of happiness is derived by the enjoyment of such possessions. Ordinary men and women wish to enjoy themselves. The Buddha does not advise all to renounce their worldly pleasures and retire to solitude. The enjoyment of wealth lies not only in using it for ourselves but also in giving it for the welfare of others. What we eat is only temporary. What we preserve we leave and go. What we give we take with us. We are remembered for ever by the good deeds we have done with our worldly possessions.

Not falling into debt is another source of happiness. If we are contended with what we have and if we are economical, we need not be in debt to any one. Debtors live in mental agony and are under obligation to their creditors. Though poor, when debt free, you feel relieved and are mentally happy. Leading a blameless life is one of the best sources of happiness for a layman. A blameless person is a blessing to himself and to others. He is admired by all and feels happier, being affected by the peaceful vibrations of others. It should be stated however that it is very, very difficult to get a good name from all. The noble-minded persons are concerned only with a blameless life and are indifferent to external approbation. The majority in this world delight themselves in enjoying pleasures while some others seek delight in renouncing them.



Non-attachment or the transcending of material pleasures is happiness to the spiritual. Nibbanic bliss, which is a bliss of relief from suffering, is the highest form of happiness. Ordinary happiness we welcome, but not its opposite, pain, which is rather difficult to endure. Pain or suffering comes in different guises. We suffer when we are subject to old age which is natural. With equanimity we have to bear the sufferings of old age.

Pain

More painful than sufferings due to old age are sufferings caused by disease, to which, if chronic, we feel that death is preferable. Even the slightest toothache or headache is sometimes unbearable. When we are subject to disease, without being worried, we should be able to bear it at any cost. Well, we must console ourselves thinking that we have escaped from a still more serious disease.

Very often we are separated from our near and dear ones. Such separation causes great pain of mind. We should understand that all association must end with separation. Here is a good opportunity to practise equanimity. More often than not we are compelled to be united with the unpleasant, which we detest. We should be able to bear them. Perhaps we are reaping the effects of our own kamma, past or present. We should try to accommodate ourselves to the new situation or try to overcome the obstacle by some means or other.

Even the Buddha, a perfect being, who has destroyed all defilements, had to endure physical suffering caused by disease and accidents. The Buddha was constantly subject to headaches. His last illness caused Him much physical suffering. As a result of Devadatta hurling a rock to kill Him, His foot was wounded by a splinter which necessitated an operation. Sometimes He was compelled to starve. At times He had to be content with horse-fodder. Due to the disobedience of His own pupils, He was compelled to retire to a forest for three months. In the forest on a couch of leaves spread on rough ground, facing piercing cold winds, He slept with perfect equa-

nimity. Amidst pain and happiness He lived with a balanced mind.

Death is the greatest sorrow we are compelled to face in the course of our wanderings in *Samsara*. Sometimes death comes not singly but in numbers which may even cause insanity. Patacara lost her near and dear ones - parents, husband, brother and two children - and she went mad. The Buddha consoled her. Kisa Gotami lost her only infant, and she went in search of a remedy for her dead son, carrying the corpse. She approached the Buddha and asked for a remedy.

"Well, sister, can you bring some mustard seed?"

"Certainly, Lord!"

"But, sister, it should be from a house where no one has died."

She found mustard, but not from a place where death had not visited. She understood the nature of life.

When a mother was questioned as to why she did not weep over the tragic death of her only son, she replied "uninvited, he came; uninformed, he went. As he came, so he went. Why should we weep? What avails weeping?"

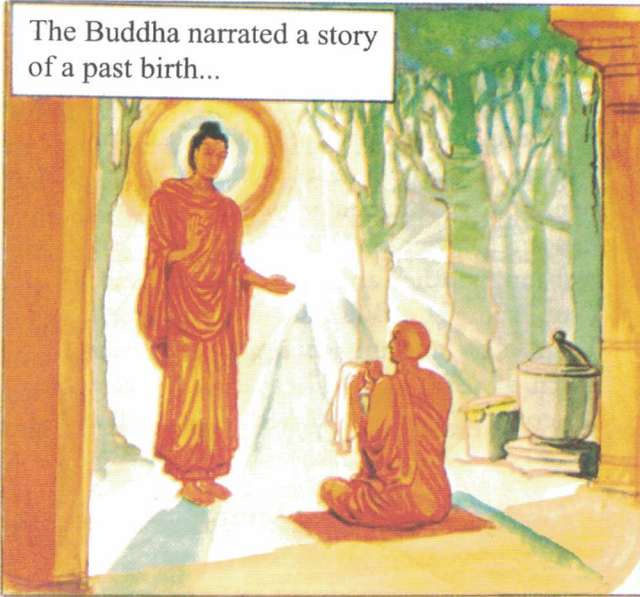
As fruits fall from a tree —tender, ripe or old— even so we die in our infancy, prime of manhood, or even in old age. The sun rises in the East only to set in the West. Flowers bloom in the morning to fade in the evening. Inevitable death, which comes to all without exception, we have to face with perfect equanimity.

*"Just as the earth whate'er is thrown upon her,
Whether sweet or foul,
Indifferent is to all alike,
Nor hatred shows, nor amity,
So likewise he in good or ill,
Must even-balanced ever be."*

The Buddha says, "When touched by worldly conditions the mind of a Arahant never wavers." Amidst gain and loss, fame and defame, praise and blame, happiness and pain, let us try to maintain a balanced mind".

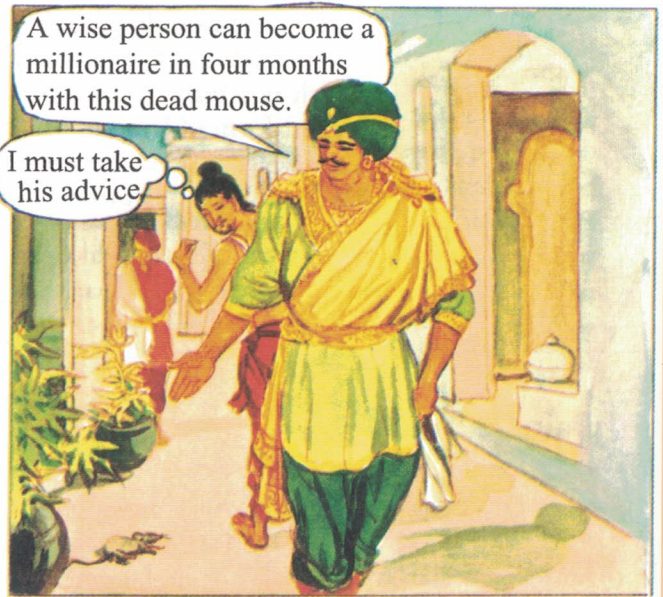


The Buddha narrated a story of a past birth...



A wise person can become a millionaire in four months with this dead mouse.

I must take his advice.

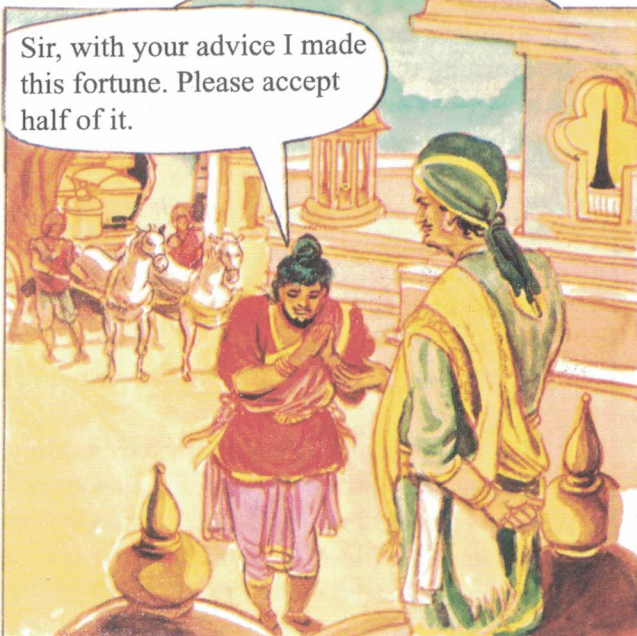


He sold the mouse and with that money bought molasses - gave them to flower pickers.

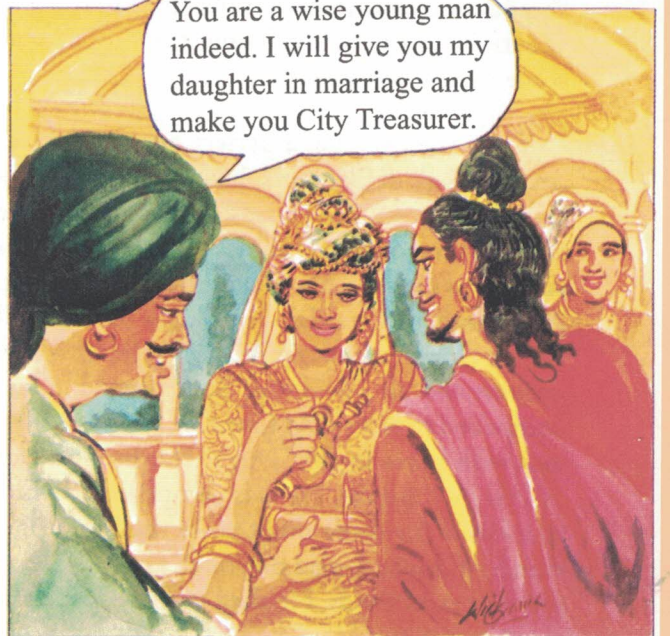


They gave him flowers to sell. By such transactions he made a fortune in four months.

Sir, with your advice I made this fortune. Please accept half of it.



You are a wise young man indeed. I will give you my daughter in marriage and make you City Treasurer.



STORY OF A MAN WHO SOLD A MOUSE

On one occasion, in ancient times, an affluent businessman was walking along a street in Benares. He was a wise person, who could see the future clearly. As he walked along, he saw a dead mouse on the road. He gave some thought to this matter and said aloud, "Any wise person who picks up this dead mouse can become an affluent business person". A young man who heard this, picked up the dead mouse, and sold it to a tavern for a farthing. The bar-keeper bought it to be given to his cat. With that little amount of money he bought some molasses. He gave molasses and drinking water to gardeners returning after gathering flowers. The flower-gatherers gave a handful of flowers each to the young man. He sold these flowers and the next day he went to the flower-garden and gave the flower-gatherers more molasses and more water. That day the flower-gatherers left for him half the flowers on the flower plants. Selling these flowers he obtained eight pennies.

Soon, on a rainy day, the branches of some trees in the King's Park fell down. The gardener did not know what to do. The young man came and offered to clear the fallen branches. He went to the children's playground, offered the children molasses and asked them to clear the Royal Park. Those branches were piled up at the entrance to the park, by the side of the main road. The potter who makes clay vessels for the King bought the branches. He gave the young man money and several clay pots. Next, he gave five

hundred grass cutters water to drink. They promised to help. When some horse traders came to town, he went to the grass-cutters and got five hundred bundles of grass. They promised not to sell grass to anyone without telling him.

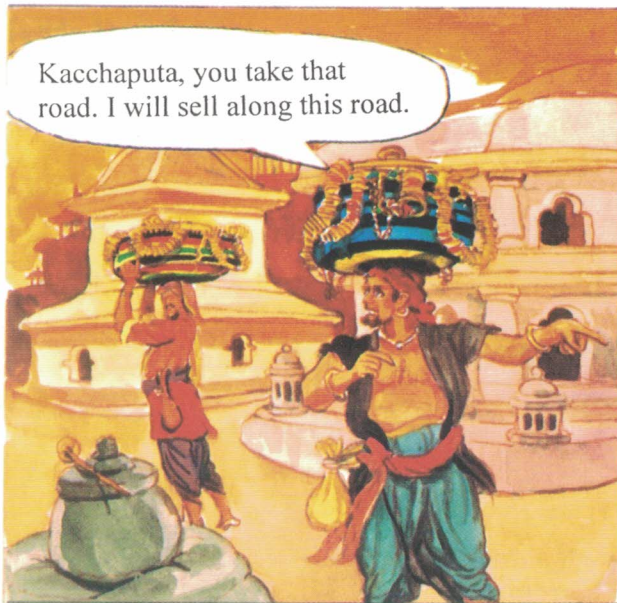
Unable to get grass for his horses elsewhere in the city, the horse-trader came to the young man and bought all his grass for a thousand pieces. Next, when a ship full of merchandise called at the port, he went there in a hired carriage, gave his ring as advance and reserved all the goods in the ship. Other merchants found that he had reserved all the goods. They paid him money and acquired the merchandise. This way, the young man was able to amass a fortune of two hundred thousand pieces.

He thought about the wise person who gave him the original advice to sell the dead mouse. He went to him with half the wealth he accumulated and told him how he became very affluent in four short months, due to his advice.

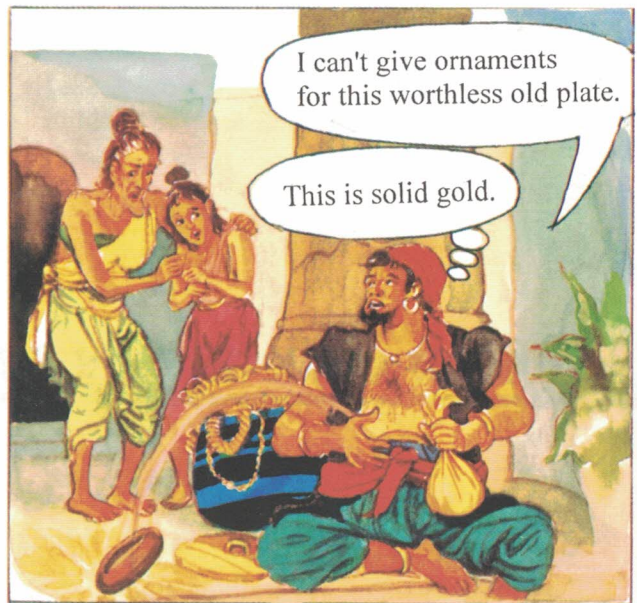
He made the young man his son-in-law by giving his daughter to him in marriage.

The young man who made such a vast profit continued to be the Treasurer of the City without losing his humility because of the vast profits he made.





Kacchaputa, you take that road. I will sell along this road.



I can't give ornaments for this worthless old plate.

This is solid gold.



What a good merchant.

I don't have enough money or goods to pay for this gold plate. Take all my goods and money, leave me only the fare for the ferry.



Ferryman, come back. I will pay handsomely.

No, I won't.



My gold plate.....

MERCHANT WHO LOST THE GOLDEN PLATE

Once upon a time, there lived two hawkers who sold a variety of goods. On one occasion the two of them decided to cross over to a settlement beyond a river. After they crossed the river the two of them agreed to go along two different streets.

Of those two hawkers one was a wicked person. He was Serivaniya by name. Serivaniya, went along a certain street, calling out his wares. A little girl, living with her Grandmother heard the call of the merchant. She came out and saw that he had beautiful ornaments for sale. She entreated her Grandmother to buy her some ornaments. The Grandmother told her that they did not have any money to buy those things with.

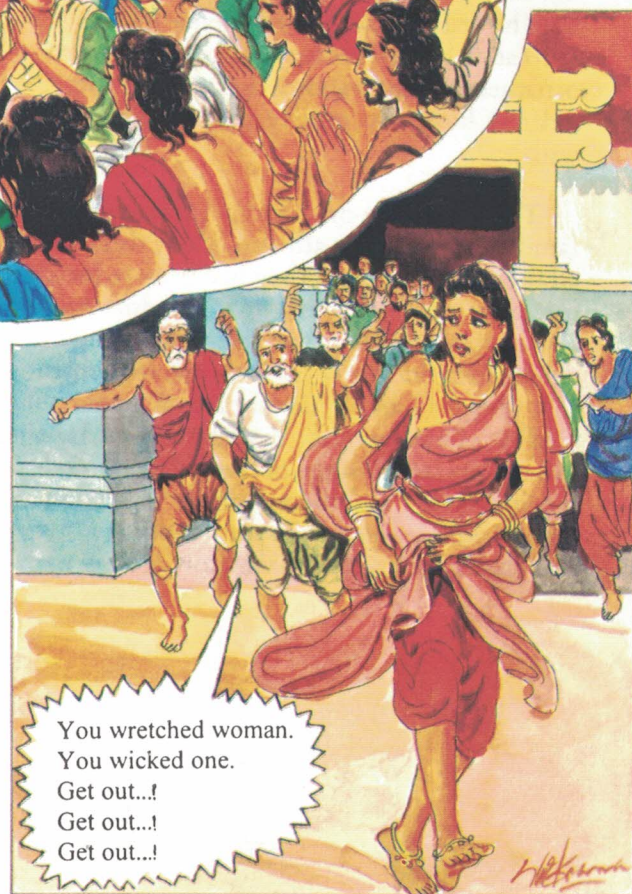
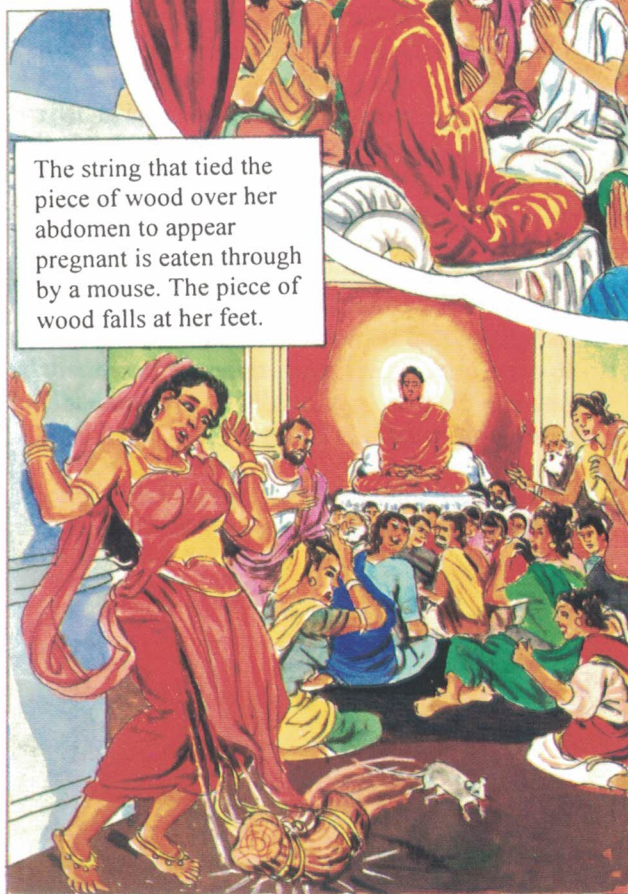
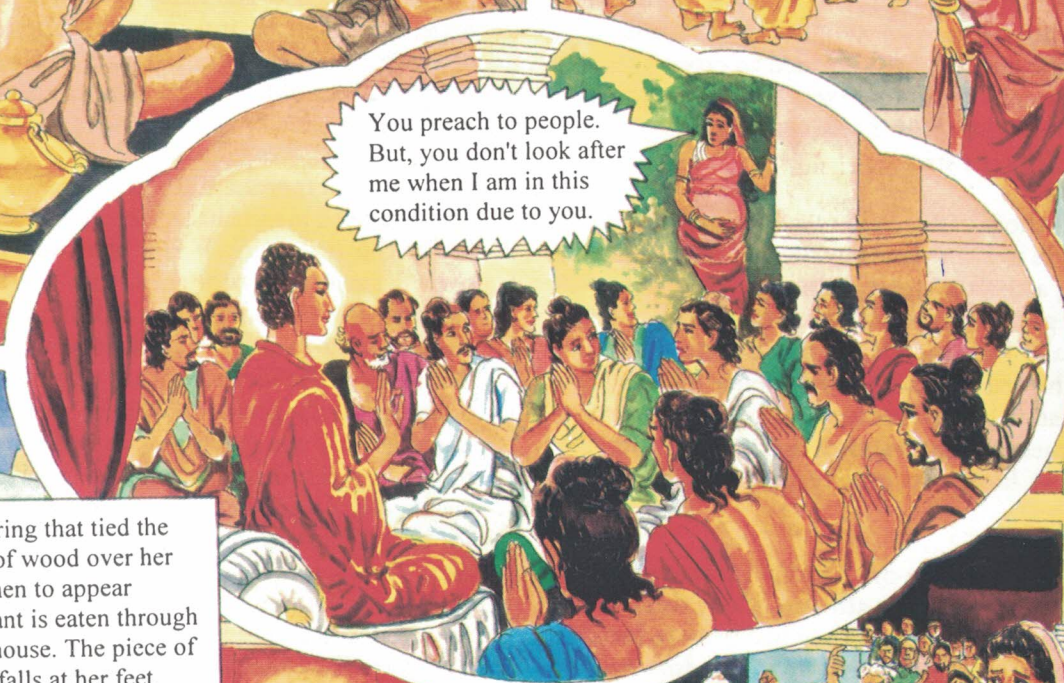
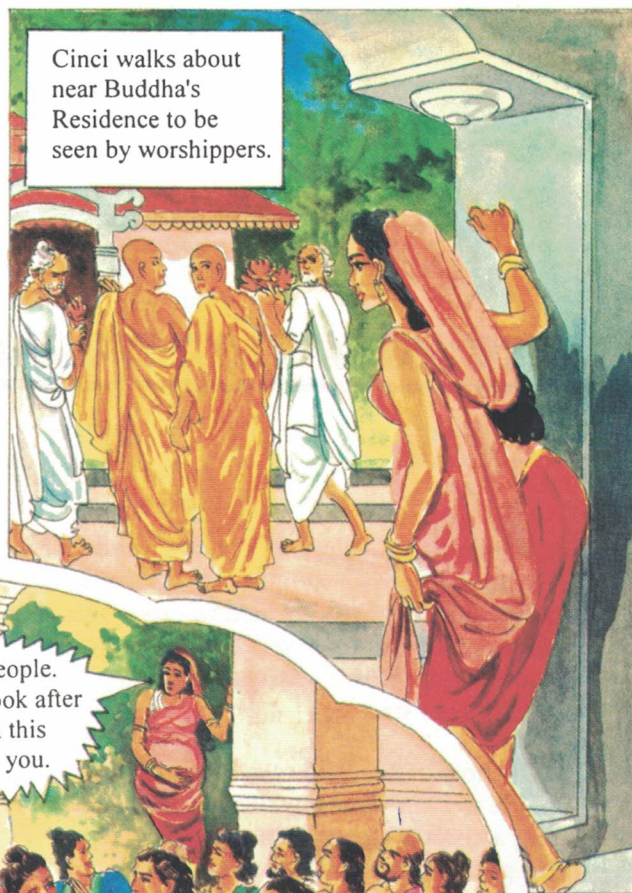
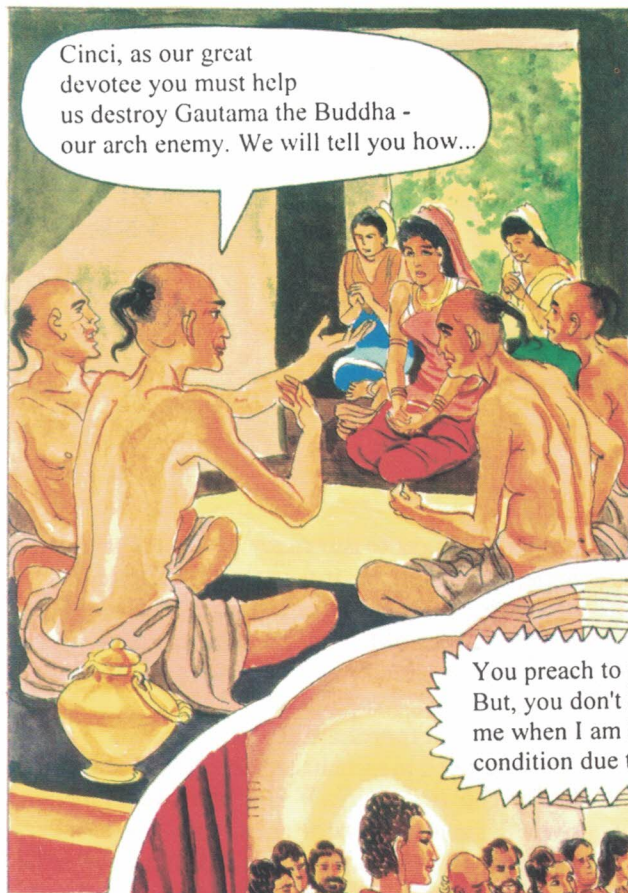
They were the only surviving members of a family that was very affluent at one time. Now, all their fortune gone, they had been reduced to dire poverty. That is why the Grandmother did not have any money for her Granddaughter's ornaments. Suddenly the little girl remembered that they had an old metal plate at home. She told her Grandmother that she could buy the ornaments in exchange of the old plate. Grandmother agreed and the merchant was called in. The Grandmother told the merchant "Dear merchant, my Granddaughter desires orna-

ments. Please take this metal plate and give some little ornament to my little Granddaughter." The merchant examined the plate and found that it was solid gold. But pretending that it was worthless he threw it aside and went away.

The good merchant Kacchaputa came along after the wicked merchant left. He also was called in by the little girl. When the old plate was shown, he at once told them that it was a very valuable object and that he did not have sufficient money to pay for it, as it was solid gold. But he gave the Grandmother and her Granddaughter all the goods and all the money he had keeping only the pair of scales and a few coins to pay the ferryman, to cross the river. The first trader—the wicked one—returned and asked for the old plate. The Grandmother said that after he threw it off a good merchant came and gave them a fortune for it. The bad merchant was extremely enraged and ran after the good merchant Kacchaputa. The good merchant was in midriver. The bad trader asked the ferryman to come back promising him to pay handsomely. But the ferryman wouldn't. The bad trader Serivaniya could not bear up his loss.

He died with his heart burst due to uncontrollable anger and a sense of loss.





WOMAN WHO WOULD INSULT THE BUDDHA

Some unvirtuous people cannot, in any way, accept the greatness of outstanding beings. They do whatever they can to sully them. They feel happy only when they sling mud at those great ones. They try to smear tar on their good name.

In the Buddha's days many attempts were made to mar His reputation. Most of these acts were made at the instigation of His religious contemporaries who were opposed to the teachings of the Buddha.

On one occasion, they hired the services of a young woman. She was asked to go and stand in the middle of the congregation when the Buddha was addressing monks and lay devotees.

The name of the woman was Cinca. She was attractive and had a capacity to say things convincingly.

One day, she appeared before the Buddha, as she was ordered. She had dressed herself up to look like a woman in the advanced stage of pregnancy. She pushed herself, right through the assembly, and stood in front of the Buddha.

She accused the Buddha of neglecting His duties by her, after reducing her to the present state. She blamed Him for not providing her with her needs at this time when she was in delicate health.

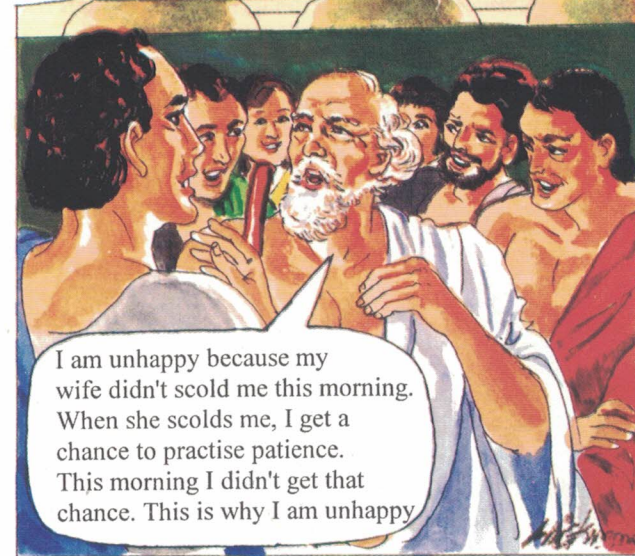
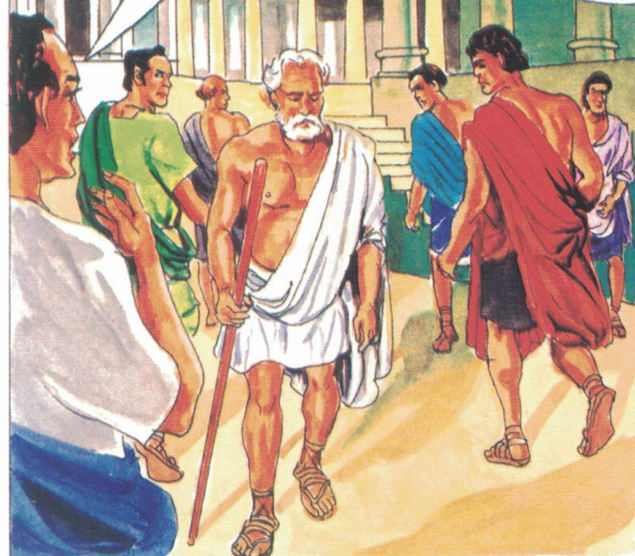
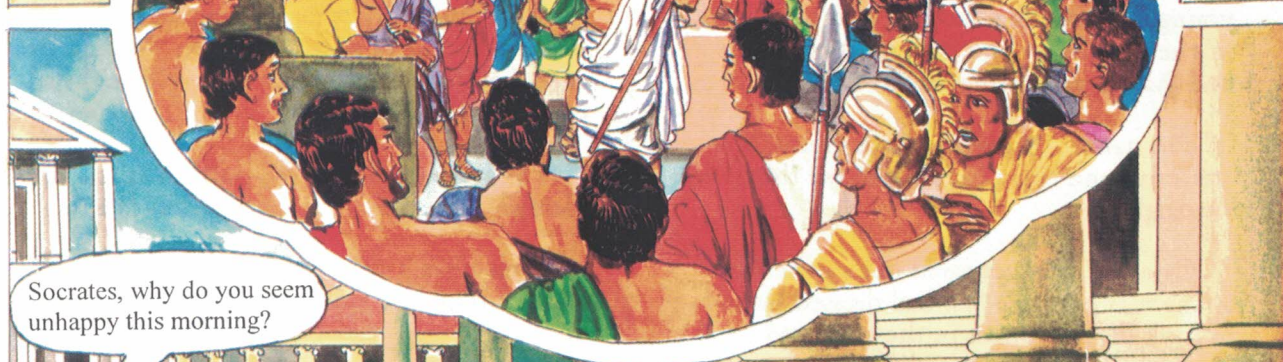
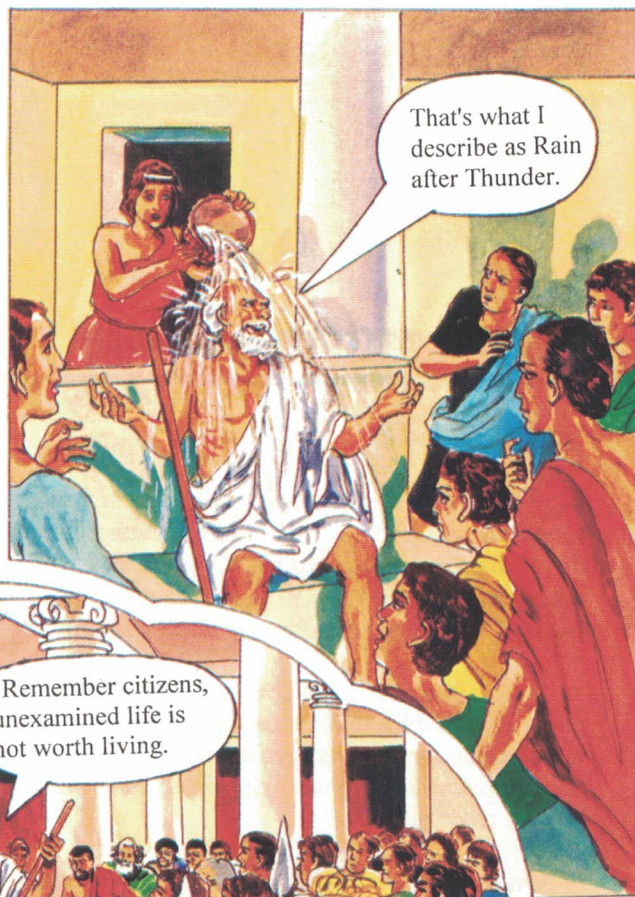
Those assembled were quite startled by these accusations. Most of them knew that those charges were false. But, still in the mind of some, doubts would have arisen about the Buddha.

Now, she had managed to appear pregnant by concealing a bundle of fuel-wood under her garment. Suddenly some rats appeared and cut lose the bundle of sticks by eating through the cord that tied the sticks together. The sticks fell down exposing her fraud.

The attempt to sully the Buddha's name and blemish His spotless reputation thus failed.

Even at such an attempt to defame Him, the Buddha remained calm.





SOCRATES: AMONG MANKIND'S GREATEST THINKERS

Socrates is one of the greatest thinkers of mankind. His methods of analysing issues are still upheld. In the history of world's educational systems, Socrates is rated as a philosopher who contributed substantially towards the expansion of human intellect.

He was born in the ancient Greek City - State of Athens. Socrates was the son of a stone sculptor. He would walk about the City of Athens meeting groups of citizens.

He did not teach anything directly. He would first allow a person to ask a question. He will then proceed to analyse the question itself, revealing areas the questioner did not visualize.

Socrates questioned himself too, in order to find out whether he really knew what he was talking about.

His quest was to discover how men could make themselves truly happy and how they could help each other.

Socrates was interested in the proper, constructive behaviour. He is also credited as the Father of 'Logic'.

He would walk about the City of Athens and would talk to anyone who would listen to him.

Some philosophers of great fame in human history - Plato for instance - were his pupils.

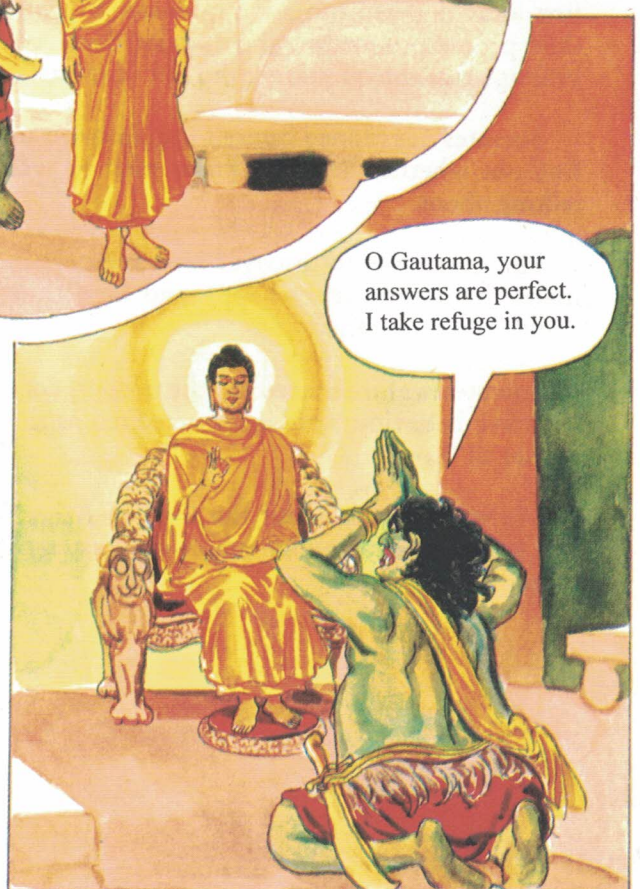
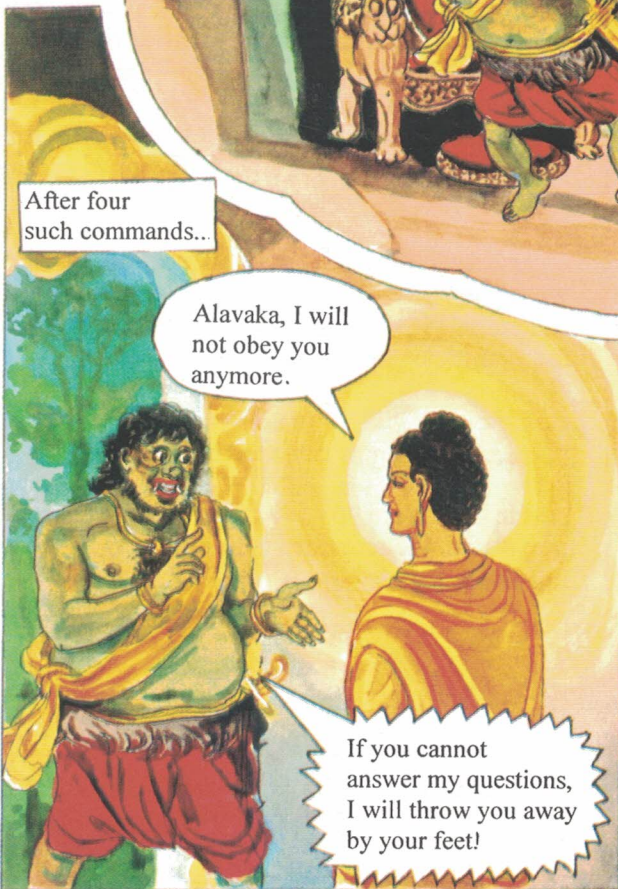
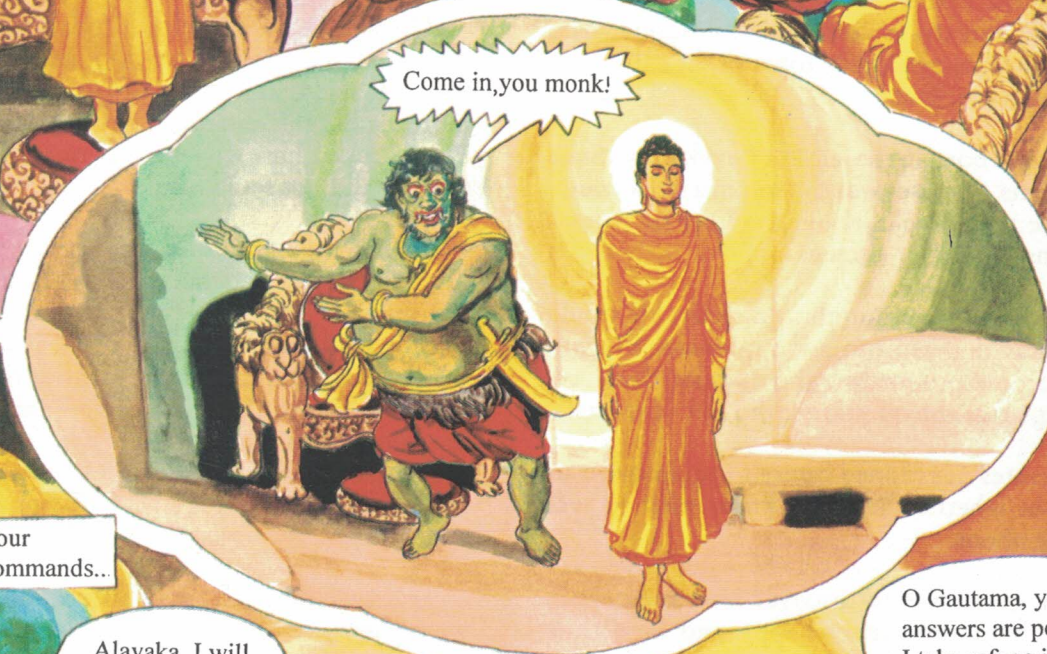
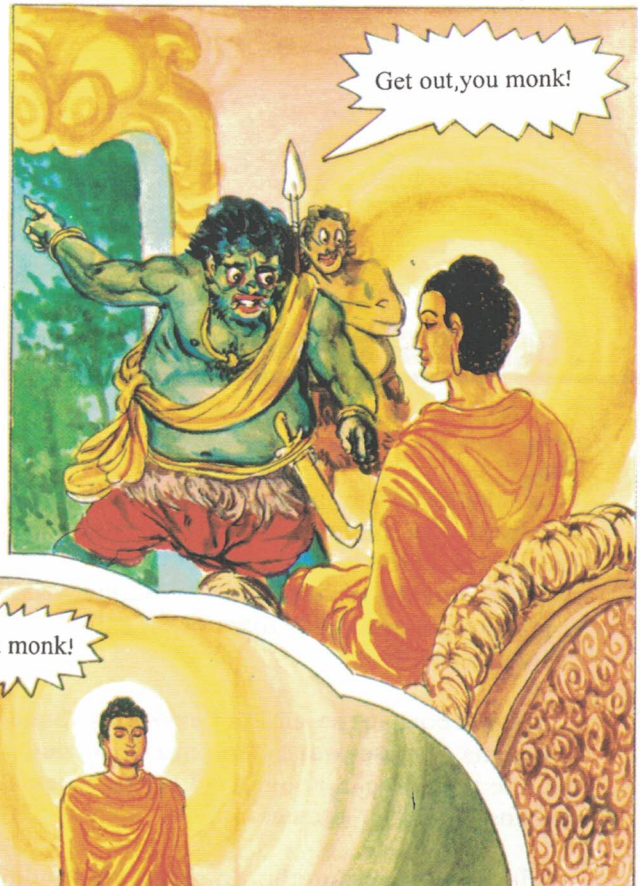
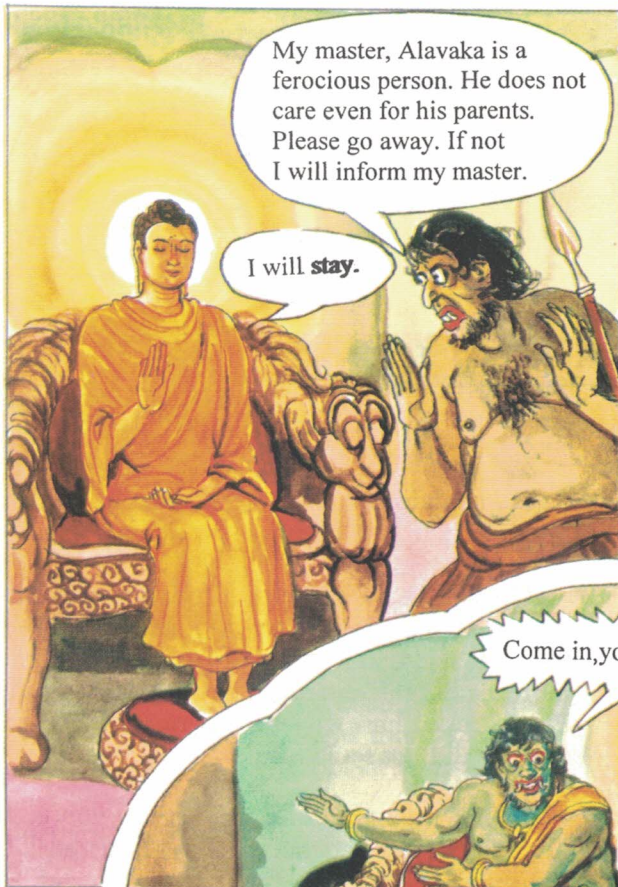
His wife was Xanthippe. Once he was walking about the streets depressed. He was asked why. He said that he was unhappy because that morning his wife did not scold him. She was ill. People asked him why he was unhappy when his wife did not scold him.

"When my wife scolds me, I get an opportunity to practice patience. Today, I missed it". On another occasion, Socrates was standing outside his house talking to some people. His wife kept on scolding him from inside the house. Suddenly, Xanthippe —his wife— came out of the house with a bucket of water. She poured the water on his head. Socrates continued unruffled, "Friends, that is what is described as rain after thunder."

Socrates taught that men should not do wrong even to their enemies. He was a great humanist. He was condemned to death by drinking hemlock.

One of his famous sayings is that "Unanalyzed life is not worth living".

He lived from 469-399 BC. Fame never made him elated. He remained a humble person walking about the city in his toga.



ALAVAKA'S FURY

Once, the Buddha visited the abode of Alavaka the demon. Alavaka was so very ferocious that each day a child was sent him as an offering to keep him pacified.

When the Buddha arrived at Alavaka's residence, the gate keeper Gadrabha got alarmed. The Buddha asked the gate keeper to give him permission to spend a night at Alavaka's abode.

The gate keeper told the Buddha never even to think of it, as Alavaka did not have any regard even for his parents.

But the Buddha insisted. Gadrabha hurried to the place where Alavaka was attending a conference and informed him of the Buddha's arrival and His request. Alavaka was furious.

Ablaze with anger, Alavaka left the meeting and returned home. He saw the Buddha seated on his favourite seat. He entered the house and started insulting the Buddha.

"Get out, you monk!" He ordered the Buddha.

"Very well, my friend," the Buddha said patiently and went out.

Next, Alavaka said, "Come in, you monk!" The Buddha said, "Very well, my friend," and came in.

Alavaka ordered the Buddha out three times, and ordered Him in three times. The Buddha behaved according to the orders given by him. But, when on the fourth occasion Alavaka ordered Him out, He refused to do it.

The Buddha said, "I will not go out, my friend."

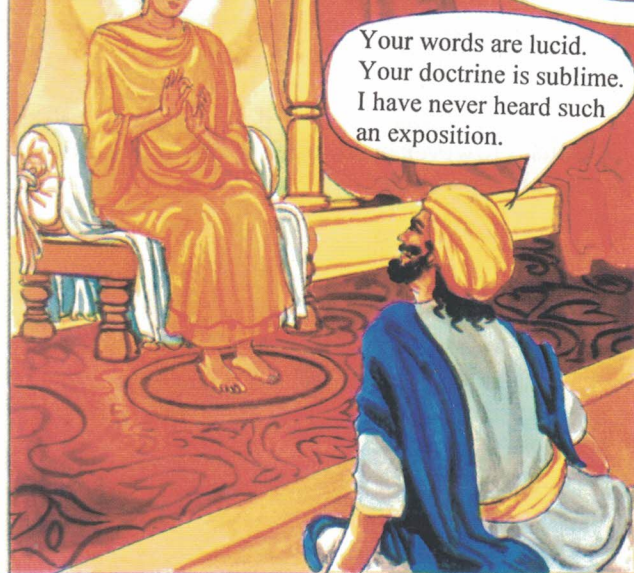
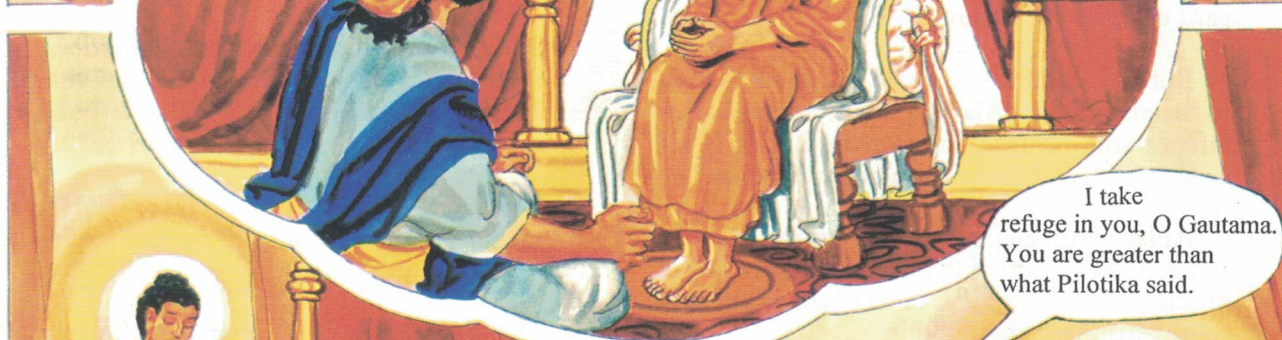
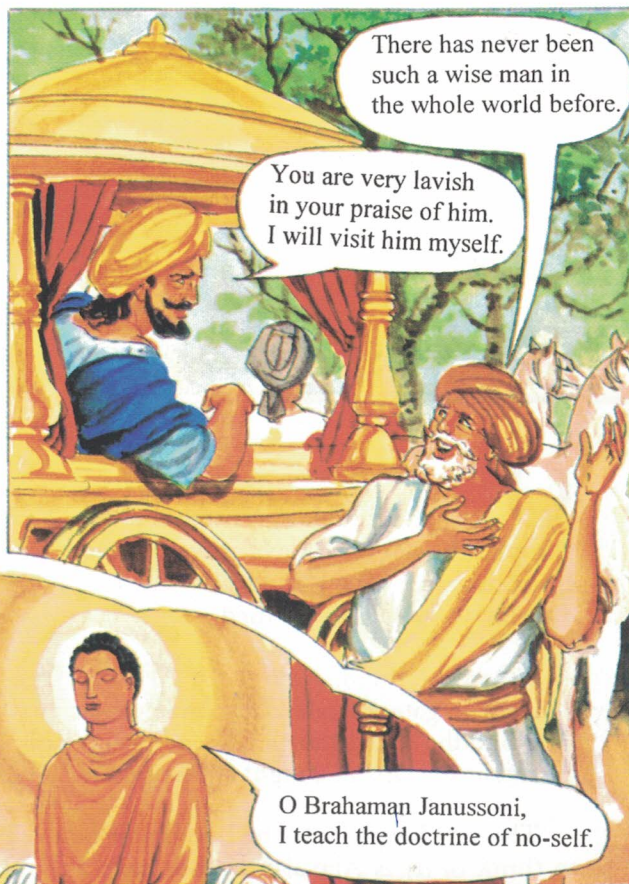
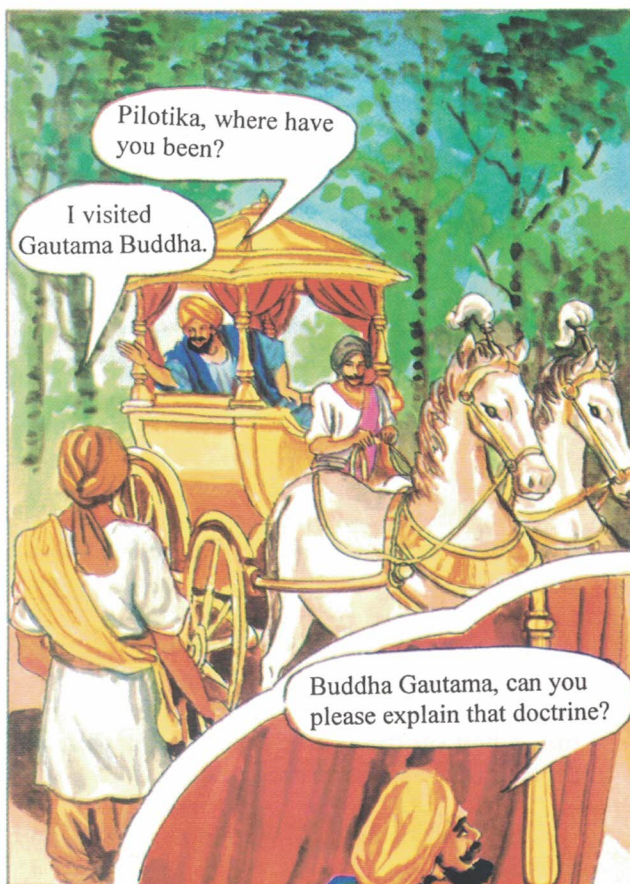
Said Alavaka "I will ask you a question. If you fail to answer it, I will distort your mind, or I will split your heart, or I will take you by your feet and throw you across the river".

Buddha answered, "Alavaka there is no one on earth who can harm me. If you like, go ahead and ask your questions."

The Buddha answered all his questions. Alavaka was fully satisfied and became an ardent devotee of the Buddha.

The Buddha was not perturbed by the insults. However harsh was the blame He did not lose His patience.





THE BRAHAMIN WHO PRAISED THE BUDDHA

In the days of the Buddha, the general attitude of learned Brahmins of His day was to find fault with the Buddha. Most of those Brahmins even insulted Him, especially because of His shaven head.

But, there is a story of high praise given to the Buddha by a learned Brahmin.

There was a very learned and highly influential Brahmin called Janussoni. One day, he was travelling through the streets of Savatthi in his chariot.

While travelling he saw Ascetic Pilotika coming along. Janussoni stopped the chariot and spoke to Pilotika. He asked where Pilotika was returning from. Pilotika said that he was returning after a meeting with the Buddha.

Janussoni asked him, "Is Venerable Gotama highly learned?"

Answered Pilotika, "Who am I to fathom the wisdom and estimate the learnedness of Ven. Gotama? It is only another person like Venerable Gotama who will be able to measure His wisdom and estimate His learnedness."

"You are praising Venerable Gotama very highly," said Janussani.

"Who am I to praise Venerable Gotama highly? All the people who matter, praise him. He is the greatest among all gods and men," Pilotika said.

Pilotika explained the greatness of the Buddha's wisdom.

After listening to Pilotika, Janussoni was so expressed by the praises lavished by Pilotika on the Buddha that he hastened to see the Buddha.

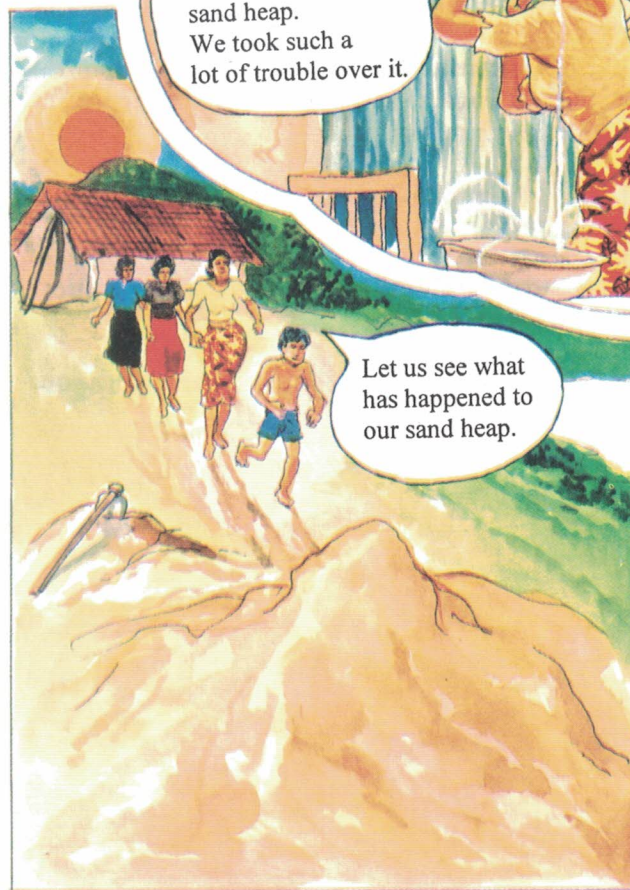
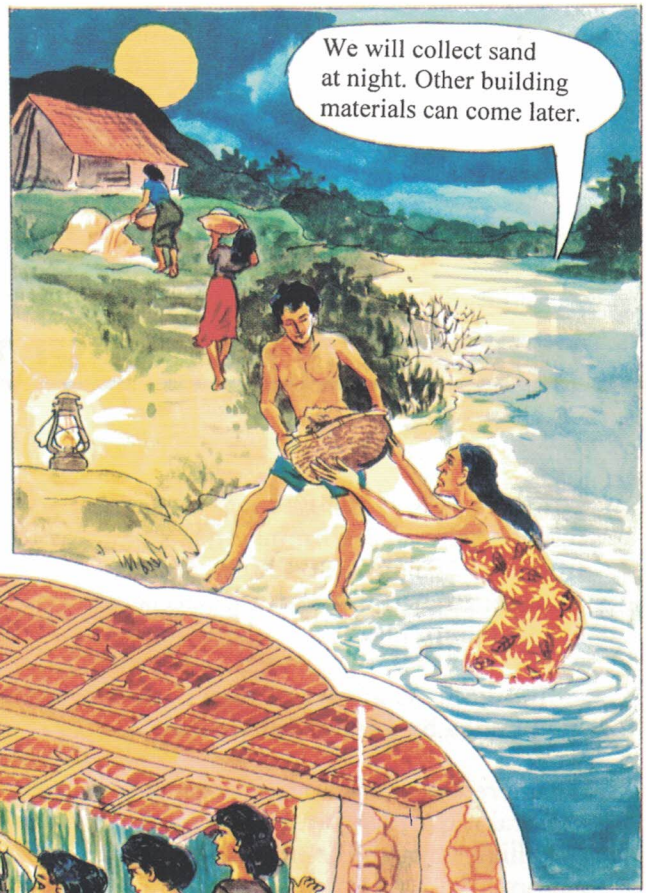
Brahmin Janussoni told the Buddha, how he met Pilotika and how he praised the Buddha very highly.

The Buddha preached to him.

After listening to Him, Brahmin Janussoni praised the Buddha and became a lifelong disciple of the Buddha.

The Buddha listened to his praises with equanimity.





HAPPINESS THROUGH EFFORT AND GOOD FORTUNE

Some people tend to think happiness comes without an effort. But, it is not so. On most occasions even good luck can come about through an effort. That effort is the right effort.

The following is a true story that illustrates how happiness can result from a right effort.

In a remote village there lived a family of five people—father, mother, two daughters and a son.

When the children were not yet fully grown up, the father died. The mother tried to bring up the family with great difficulty. She would work hard and find ways and means of giving the children an education along with their other essential needs like food and clothing.

As time went on, the two girls became grownups. The youngest son too was about thirteen.

At this time, the old house they lived in was getting dilapidated little by little. The mother decided that they needed a little house.

But, of course, they did not have the means to put up a new house.

The mother told the children what her plans were. She told them that the house has to be put up with their collective effort.

Now, they lived near a river. The mother told her children that each night after dinner they will go to the river and fetch sand. The sand from the river would be needed to put up the house. This way, each night, when the neighbours were asleep, the mother and her three children would make several trips to the river and bring home sand. Little by little their heap of sand got bigger and bigger.

One night, while they were asleep, a heavy rain came down. They had difficulty in being adequately sheltered from the rain.

In the morning, the mother came out and looked at their pile of sand. Some of it had been washed off. But, right on the top of the sand-pile something was gleaming in the first rays of the sun. It was a very valuable precious stone. The mother was happy. So were the children. They acquired a considerable fortune and lived happily. But, even in their happiness they never forgot the early days when they had to struggle hard to keep themselves alive.



Let us run away. I have taken the disguise of a servant-maid. Though I run away with our servant, my parents are ready to give me in marriage to a great person.

Patach ara, I really love you. But, I am afraid.

Years later,.....

Oh, my husband, what a tragedy!

My new born is being taken by a hawk. The elder child is caught in this torrent.

My husband is killed by a cobra. My new born was taken away by a hawk. My elder child was drowned. My parents and my brother are burning in the pyre. Oh, oh, oh.

Sister, be calm. Be aware. Understand reality.

WOMAN WHO LOST EVERYTHING

Patacara was the daughter of a wealthy merchant in the city of Savatthi, during the days of the Buddha. She fell in love with a young man in their domestic service.

When she was about to be given in marriage to a young man who was her social equal, she eloped with the servant with whom she was in love.

The two of them settled down in a remote village and led a harsh life.

When she was pregnant with her first child, Patacara suggested to her husband that he should take her to her parents. But the husband was afraid of meeting her parents.

But, when the husband was not at home she set out alone to go to her parents. The husband went after her. He met her and when they were travelling along together, birth-pains came upon her and she gave birth to her child while on the way. They came back home without going to her parent's house.

On a second occasion too, when she was with child, she left her house all alone to go and see her parents. This time too the husband caught up with her.

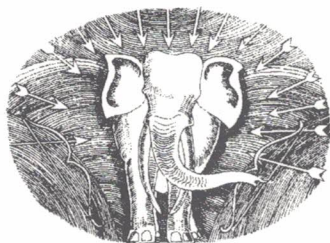
As in the earlier instance, this time too, birth-pains came upon her while she was on the way.

It was raining heavily. The husband went into the forest to find some trees and leaves to shelter her and her first-born son from rain. In the forest when he was looking for trees and other materials to prepare a shelter, a ferocious snake stung him. He died instantly.

Patacara gave birth to her second son and in the morning went out to look for her husband. She found him dead, stung by a snake. Utterly helpless, buffeted by deep sorrow, she went along with the intention of seeing her parents.

On her way, she had to cross a swollen river. Since she could not cross the stream with both children at once, she left the older boy on the bank and took the new-born baby to the other shore. Leaving the new born-baby on the shore, she came back for the other boy. While she was at mid-stream, she saw a hawk carrying away her new born baby. She tried to shoo it away but it carried the child away. Mistaking her gesture as a call for him to come, the other child stepped into the river and was carried away by the torrent. She lost both her children. She started to go to her parent's house. On the way she learnt that their house had fallen in the rain killing her parents and brother. Their bodies were burning in the same pyre. Deep grief made her demented. But, the Buddha gave her peace. Overcoming her intense suffering she advanced spiritually and became an Arahant (Saint).





Kālama Sutta

*“Do not believe in anything simply because
you have heard it.*

*Do not believe in traditions because
they have been handed down for many generations.*

*Do not believe in anything because
it is spoken and rumoured by many.*

*Do not believe in anything simply because
it is found written in your religious books.*

*Do not believe in anything merely
on the authority of your teachers and elders.*

*But, after observation and analysis,
when you find anything that agrees with reason and
is conducive to the good and benefit of one and
all, then accept it and live up to it.*

THE BUDDHA



Morals



*All people seek happiness.
Every undertaking of man is directed towards happiness.*

*It is very important that everyone is happy.
A person who is happy can make others also happy.
If people are unhappy, the whole world will become
gloomy, chaotic and troubled.*

*The main key to human happiness is affection and
love towards each other. Love and affection, in turn,
arise from perfect understanding.*

*In today's world, such perfect understanding
is becoming more and more difficult. That explains why
happiness has dwindled in most areas in our world.*

*Today, more people feel threatened.
We must allay those fears. If we show others
that we do not harbour ill-will towards them, they can live
relaxed lives —lives that are free from fear. We must allay fears and
must, in addition, extend help to those who need it. Elderly people,
destitute persons and children need the help of others to get along.
We must see to the needs of the younger ones. Happiness,
through affection for parents and children, is the
main theme of the present publication.*



HOW TO FIND REAL HAPPINESS

Happiness, said Life, "is a wayward prize, to be won by men with patient striving; half the race you have run, now please arise, and push on, the goal is at the turning."

Do you want happiness? This simple question will always be answered with a big 'Yes'. Yes, we all, without exception, want to have happiness, although the idea of what constitutes happiness, and how it can be obtained, differs from person to person.

One writer says, "Happiness, as viewed by most people, is much sought for destination. It is something to be. It is something to become. To this unfortunate lot, happiness is the end of the rainbow, the pot of gold. They spend a lifetime chasing rainbows. They might as well chase their own shadows for they shall never find in the external which only resides within".

Happiness is in the journey, not in the destination. Happy is he who has lofty and noble aspirations. Happy is he who is enriching the lives of all those about him. Happy is he who allows others to live peacefully without disturbing them. Happy is he who is contributing something to make this world a better place in which to live. Happy is he whose work, whose chores, whose daily tasks are labours of love. Happy is he who loves love. Happy is he who is happy.

The Search for Happiness

Modern life is a struggle - a struggle to gain monetary rewards, comfort and luxury. Instead of bringing happiness, this lifestyle brings anxieties and stress. There are important moments in everyone's life when all material things are of little value when compared to the mental or spiritual joy of detachment from worldly things.

In living a lay life, the importance of economic welfare for leading a good life cannot be understated. We should not pretend that people can be happy if they are starving and living under miserable conditions. Poverty and living in slum areas can stifle human happiness. It is a wretched life in the slums if a large family has to live, eat, sleep and procreate in a small hut. The wretchedness of the environment and the desperate lives of the residents therein can often make such areas a breeding place for vice and bitterness - unless it compromises a community of saints who seek peace in poverty.

However, it is useful to remember that wealth and poverty, happiness and misery, are all relative terms. One person may be rich but unhappy; another may be poor but happy. Wealth is a blessing if rightly and widely used. But part of the tragedy of the poor is their selfish desire for material things. If their cravings are not fulfilled, they live with resentment. The tragedy of the rich is their inability to rise above their wealth. They cling to their wealth foolishly. Hence, happiness is not found in either case, with the poor or the rich.

Some people think that a good and congenial life partner is a source of happiness. It may be so to some extent. Other people think that children are another source of happiness. But these are not stable conditions either. A life partner can die or leave them, while some children could bring sorrow than happiness to their parents. We should learn to be contented and happy with what little we have which has been bestowed on us. We should even be happy and contented with our present state of being even though we are not fortunate enough to be blessed with the least of our humble expectations.



We see here that sometimes our decision regarding other people must be guided by the heart rather than the cold intellect. We could also mention in passing that if we crave for anything beyond reason it can affect us mentally and upset our sense of balance. Congenial conditions in one's political, economic and social environment are important for one's happiness in a society. Sir Philip Gibbs in his book, *Ways of Escape*, says, "What human nature is trying to find, in its eternal quest for happiness, is some system of government and society which will give to every individual a full and fair chance of developing his personality to the utmost: by interesting work and not too much of it; by security for himself and his family and his fellow humans; (a sensitive and generous-hearted man cannot be happy if masses of human beings are suffering around him;) by a decent minimum of comfort, and by liberty of thought and action restricted only by a code of honour which forbids him to be hurtful to his neighbours. In that liberty of thought and action he has his chance of adventure and delight: of becoming aware of beauty, penetrating further into knowledge, getting more mastery over himself and his surroundings, reaching out to everything in life which is worth having for mind and body."

Buddhism teaches to adopt harmless and righteous means to gain happiness. There is no meaning in trying to enjoy one's happiness by causing suffering to another person or other living beings. This is in keeping with the advice of the Buddha: "*Blessed are they who earn their livelihood without harming others.*"

Ingredients for Happiness

In building a happy, purposeful life, we should exercise our compassion and wisdom, the two wings that can fly man to the summit of human perfection. If we are to develop the emotional aspect neglecting the intellectual, we will become good-hearted fools, while the development of our intellectual side at the neglect of the emotional will make us hard-hearted intellectuals with no feelings for others. According to the Buddha, compassion and wisdom must be developed jointly for man to gain liberation. Good life is inspired by love and guided by knowledge. What is compassion? Compassion is love, charity, kindness and tolerance. It is acting out of love and concern for all that live, especially when they are in unfortunate circumstances.

And what is wisdom? Wisdom is seeing things as they are, and acting out the noble qualities of

the mind. When a man sees a beautiful woman and is attracted to her, he wishes to see her again and again. He derives pleasure and satisfaction from her presence. However, when the situation changes and he can no longer see her, he must not act unreasonably and behave foolishly. This unsatisfactory side is a fact of human experience. If he has no unrealistic attachment or selfish clinging to her, he will be relatively free from that suffering. In the pleasures of life, there are pains and sorrows. While there is no denying the happiness that people derive from sense of pleasure, the nature of such pleasure is brief and does not offer lasting happiness. The realization of this fact is wisdom.

The ingredients for happiness are simple. Happiness is a state of mind. It cannot be found in the material things about us, such as wealth, power or fame. Those who spend a lifetime harvesting and accumulating more wealth than they need will be disillusioned and disappointed when they discover, only too late, that all the money in the world cannot buy a grain of happiness. The search for pleasure must not be confused with the search for happiness. Pleasure is a passing show and does not offer lasting happiness. Pleasure can be bought, but not happiness. Happiness comes from within, based on the foundation of simple goodness and clear conscience.

No one is happy unless he is contented with himself. The quest for mental tranquillity is only possible through mental culture or meditation. There is so much to do, and so little is done. Only through self-analysis and purification will our latent seeds of virtues be able to sprout to reveal our divine and human nature. It is not an easy task. It requires perseverance, determination and effort. Happiness is a perfume you cannot pour on others without getting a few drops on yourself.

If you want to live peacefully and happily, allow others also to live peacefully and happily. Unless and until you adjust yourself to live according to these noble principles you cannot expect happiness and peace in this world. And you should not expect gratitude from others. Dale Carnegie says, "If we want to find happiness, let us stop thinking about gratitude or ingratitude and give for the inner joy of giving. Ingratitude is natural, like weeds. Gratitude is like a rose. It has to be fed, watered, cultivated, loved and protected." It is not in man's nature to appreciate anything that comes to him easily. However when these things are taken away then only does he appreciate it. The air we breathe and our vital organs are all taken for granted and we abuse them, sometimes



until it is too late. We should not be like a fish which does not know the value of water until it is taken out of it.

"It has been my observation," says Abraham Lincoln, "that people are just about as happy as they make up their minds to be."

You cannot hope to gain happiness and peace by simple praying. You have to work to gain such blessings. Praying for blessing for protection is useful but you should not forget to lock the door when you go out from the house. You should not neglect your responsibilities. If you act according to moral principles, you can create your own heaven right here on earth. But when you violate them, you can feel the hell-fire on this earth itself. People wring their hands and grumble when they do not know how to live according to the natural and cosmic law of kamma and lead a respectable life as a gentleman. We can all enjoy real heavenly bliss in this world without waiting to die to enjoy it. There is no need to create heaven elsewhere to reward virtue or a hell to punish vice. Virtue and vice have inevitable reactions in this world itself. One of the most baffling questions mankind is faced with is whether there are places called "heaven" and "hell" in existence. People have no clear understanding on this concept.

Where is heaven and hell? There was once a monk whose favorite subject for his preaching was "heaven and hell". One of the devotees who was getting tired of listening to the monk's constant repetition, one day stood up and asked "Tell me where is this heaven and hell? If you cannot answer me, I will call you a liar" The monk being an innocent person became afraid. Instead of answering, he kept silent. His silence made the man even more angry and he shouted "speak to me or I'll beat you up!" The monk quickly gathered his wits and replied, "Hell is around you now, with your anger." The man, realizing the truth, calmed down and began to laugh. He then asked "Where is heaven then?" to which the monk replied "It is now around you, with your laughter." Heaven and hell are what we make of our lives. Heavens and hells exist in any part of the universe where living beings exist. There are no such separate places.

Where is Happiness?

Where do we look for happiness? "Within you," says the Buddha. Nobody will deny that

happiness is the most desirable state of being. Happiness is not something which simply happens. Happiness is a state of consciousness that does not depend upon the physical appetites and passions.

The contented man who had no shirt. A certain oriental king who was very unhappy, sought the advice of a philosopher. The philosopher advised the king to search for the happiest and the most contented man in his kingdom and to wear his shirt. After a long search, the king finally found the man - but he had no shirt!

A well-known writer says (*referring to the Buddha*), "If you want to see the most contented and the happiest man in this world, look at the prince in the beggar's clothing."

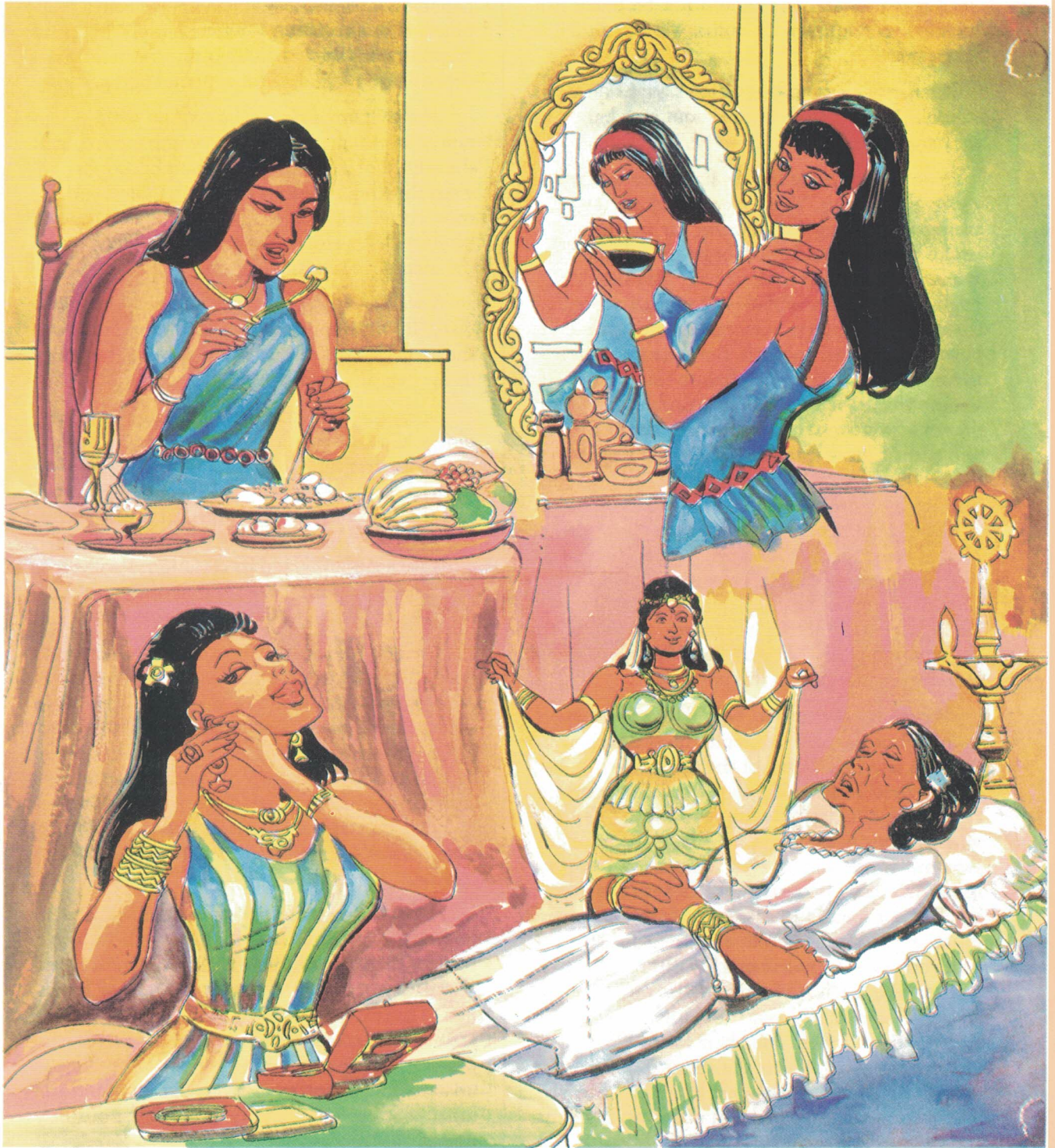
Unsatisfied desire is the main cause of unhappiness. Get rid of your desires, and you will be free from your unhappiness. "One thing only do I teach", says the Buddha, "the cause of suffering and the way of cessation from suffering. Just as sea water has one taste, so is my teaching which deals with suffering and its cessation. I will show you the path from the unreal to the real, from darkness to light, and from death to eternity."

Peace or satisfaction is also dependent on one's needs. Dogs like bones but not grass. Cows like grass but not bones. In the same way, some people like excitement more than peace; for others peace is more important than excitement. Just as delicious food to one man can become harmful to another; the medicine which cures the sickness of one can become the cause of death to another. One person's pleasure can become a nuisance to another.

Happiness is a mental state which can be attained through culture of the mind. External sources such as wealth, fame, social position and popularity are but temporary sources of happiness. The real source is the mind. The mind which is controlled and cultured is the real source of happiness. The opinion that mental tranquillity is unattainable is not true. Everyone can cultivate inner peace and tranquillity through the purification of the mind.

By renouncing that which is perishable on earth, one can get imperishable gift of happiness.





Men and women are actors and actresses.

Men and women, while they are on earth in their brief lives, eat and drink. Decorate themselves daily. Enjoy delicacies. Apply fragrant perfumes. But, after a short period, they depart. This way, they are like actors and actresses, who appear on stage briefly and exit.



GOOD HEALTH IS THE GREATEST GAIN

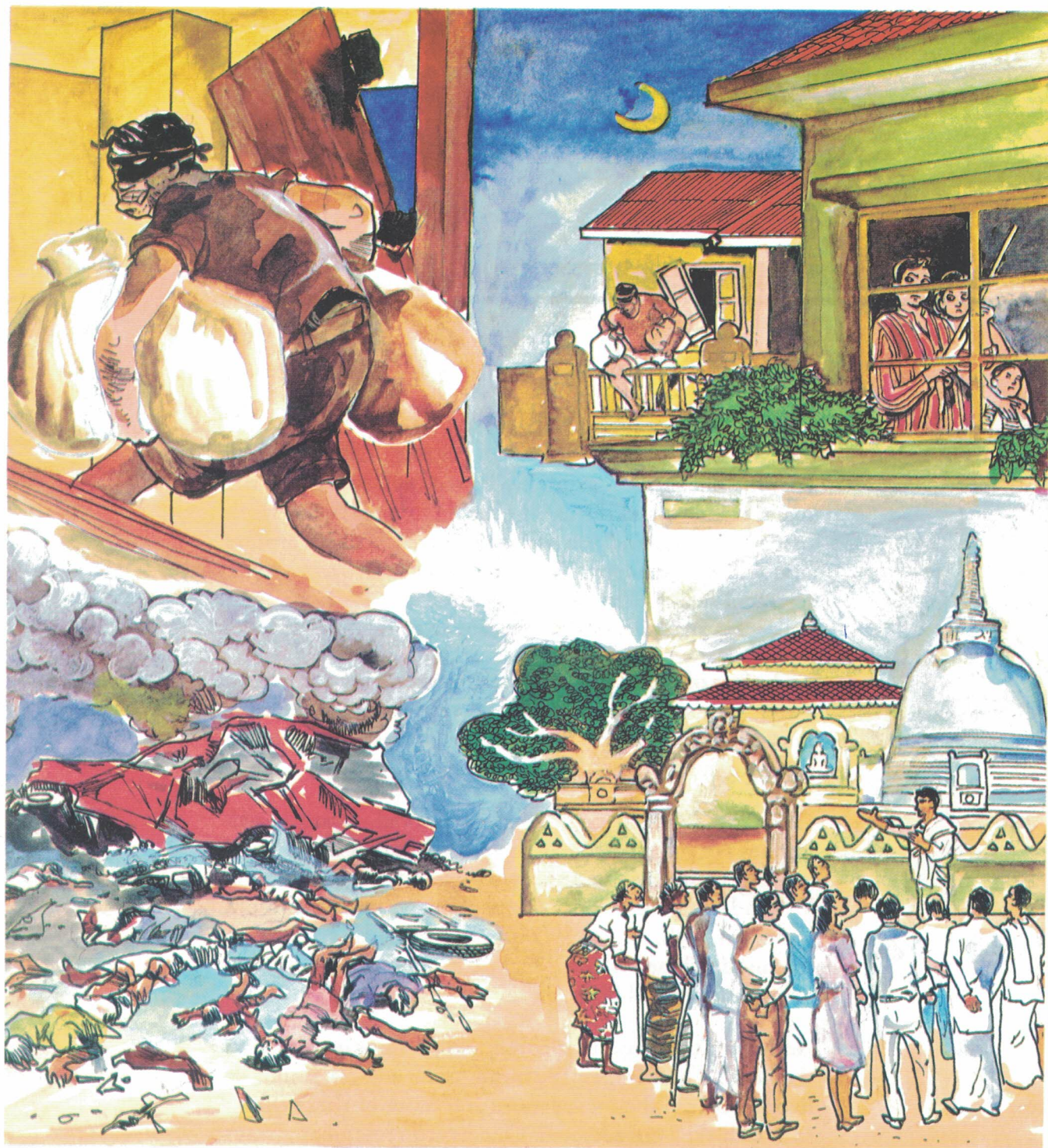
The Buddha said, “Arogya Parama Labha” (Good health is the greatest gain). If a person is ill, subject to frequent sickness and disease, he cannot attend to his work properly. His mind too will be clouded. Others around him will feel unhappy. Time and money have to be spent to regain health. Therefore, good health is a major key to happiness and an important source of gain.

To be free of illness one must have a clean body and a clean mind. One must know what food is wholesome. Eating must be in moderation. Proper precautions must be taken at the slightest sign of health-failure.

Cleanliness should be properly observed. Good health implies not only the care of the body, but that of the mind as well. Cultivate the mind with good thoughts. Extend love and compassion to all. These thoughts keep your mind clean and fresh. Anger, jealousy, and greed are harmful to the mind. These evil ideas make the mind ill. An ill-mind brings about an ill-body.

Addiction to drugs, to alcohol and to smoking destroys the body. These impair the mind. Such addicts cannot be happy because they want more and more of those things to which they are addicted. One has to remember always that good health is the greatest gain. All other forms of fortune issue from good health. If someone were to offer drugs, alcohol or tobacco that harm your health, learn to say ‘NO’. The courage to say that will protect your health.





Protect ourselves against burglary.

In a village or a city, if a home is burgled, that news makes neighbours alert. They protect their homes with double care against possible burglary. But, about death the situation is different. They see all people being taken away by Death. But, unlike during burglaries, when death happens all around them, people are not alert. How is it that people do not practise virtue seeing death all around them?



STEALING CREATES UNHAPPINESS

Imagine a person who has collected some money with difficulty and going to the city. His purpose in going to the city is to buy some things for his daughter's wedding. But, immediately after he gets off the bus, a pick-pocket steals all his money. You can realise what an appalling tragedy it is for that man.

But this kind of thing happens in the world hundreds of times each day. Sometimes the robbers steal trivial things. On other occasions, they steal very valuable things.

The result of all those acts of theft is the same — great unhappiness for the person who has fallen victim. Stealing makes a whole community unhappy. Suspicion clings to almost everyone.

Men who steal cannot enjoy their stolen goods with a peaceful mind. Most of the thieves have to pay for what they steal when they are punished by law. They have to live at least part of their life in prison. Children should be trained to respect the property of others. From one's early days, one must learn never to acquire anything by theft. It is only that way societies can be saved from those who steal and make people unhappy.





Hawk carrying a lump of flesh.

A hawk carrying a lump of flesh is in considerable danger. Other hawks, seeing it, surrounds it and attacks it. To get the lump of flesh, they might even kill it. In the same way, those who indulge in sensual pleasure, too, are likely to come to grief.



THE NEED TO CULTIVATE LOVE AND COMPASSION

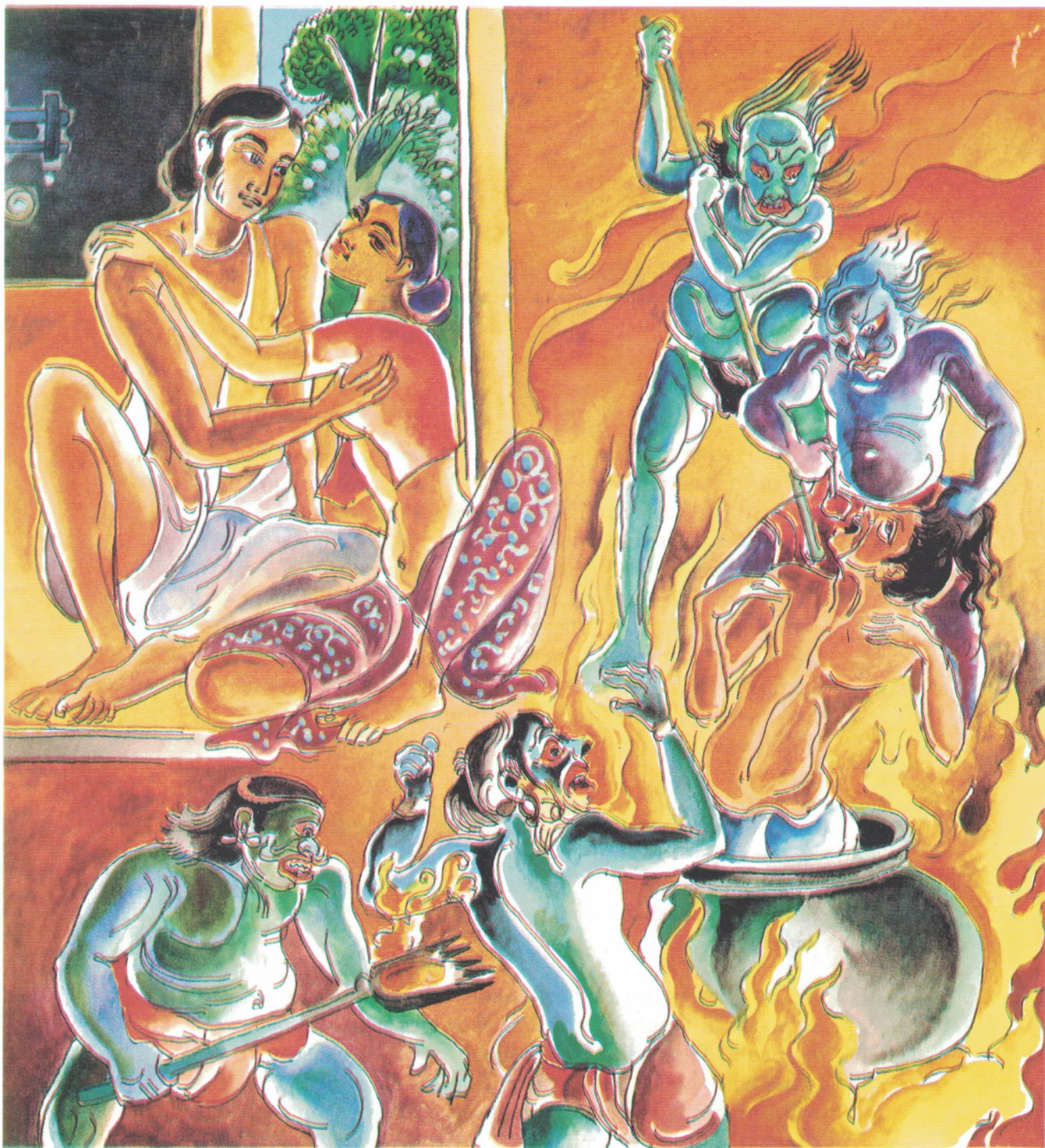
All living beings are comrades in suffering who are subjected to a common predicament. In the average human mind, there is a rubbish heap of evil; but fortunately, there is also a storehouse of virtue waiting to be tapped. The choice of developing virtue or committing evil is really up to oneself. The practice of sympathetic feelings for the suffering of others should be cultivated. A happy, contented life is only attained by overcoming selfishness and developing goodwill, understanding and benevolence. We should not condemn others by picking on their weaknesses or mistakes and disregarding their good work and good nature.

In the Dhammapada, the Buddha says, "Hatred is never appeased by hatred in this world. It is appeased by love. This is an eternal law." This natural law was also taught by Jesus who said that a person should do good to those who hate him.

To do good is to bring to oneself all the powerful good elements in nature. To do evil is to welcome destructive elements. Those who live in hate will die in hate, just as those who live by the sword will die by the sword. Every evil thought is as if it were a sword directed at him who draws it. Once a person realises this fact, he should be afraid of harbouring evil and selfish thoughts.

It is a spiritual truth that evil can only be overcome by its opposite, positive force of good. Love and compassion are the antidotes for hatred. Goodwill is the antidote for anger.





Suffering of man coveting another's wife.

There are those sinners who are tempted to seek the company of the wives of others. When they indulge in that pleasure they feel a great sense of joy. But, when they begin to suffer intensely in hell they regret their past wrongs. Therefore, wise people always shun that kind of grave sin.



THE NEED TO BE LAW-ABIDING

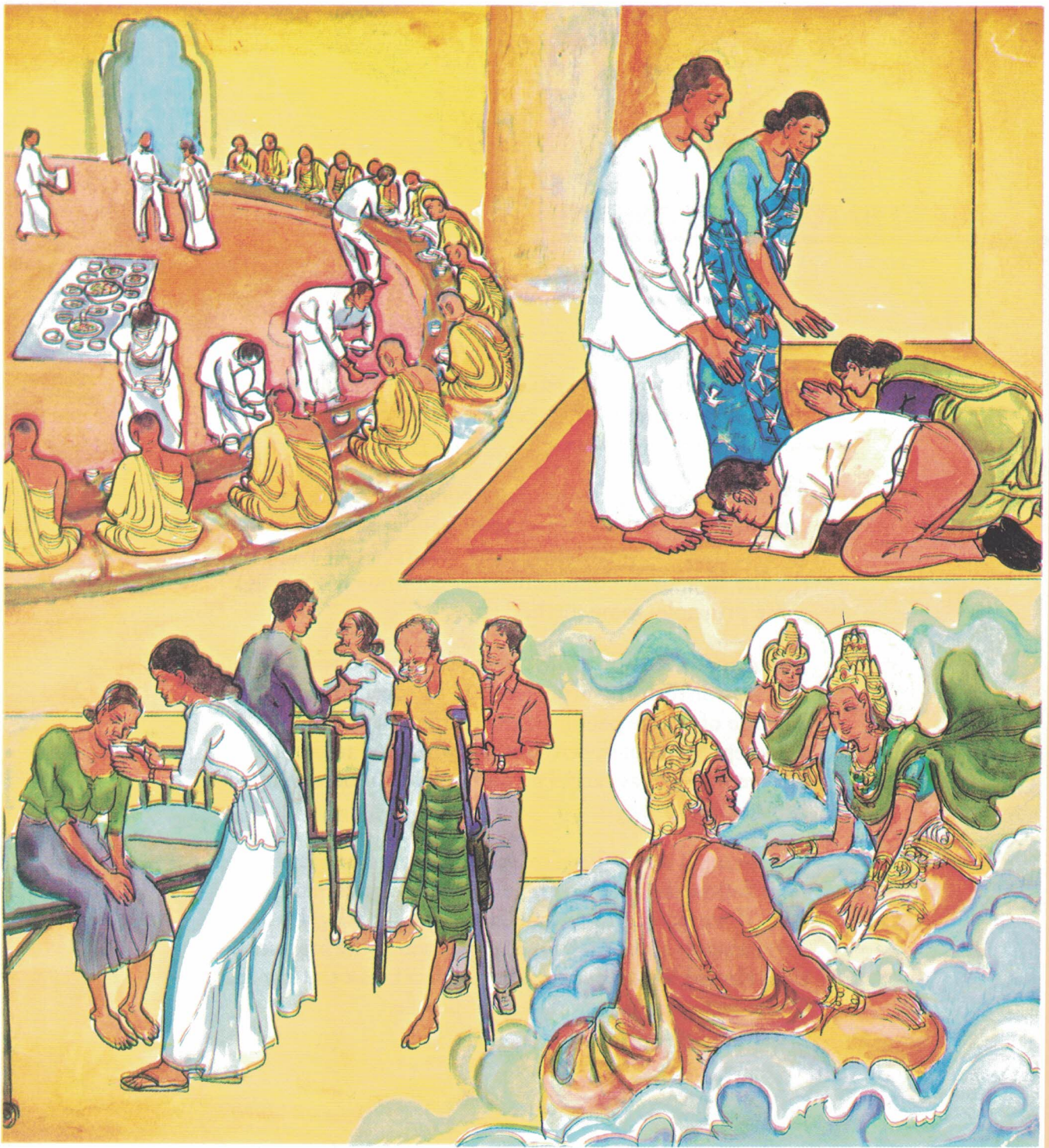
Not only whole societies, even families, continue harmoniously because they accept certain written or unwritten conventions or laws.

These laws and regulations have come into being as a systematization of the experience of people over a long period of time. Laws are made and enforced to ensure that the life in a given community can continue according to some principle- some method.

When laws and regulations govern society arbitrary action will not disturb the arrangements of social transactions. The life of all the people in the community will go on in an accepted manner, without allowing one individual to behave in one way, and a second individual behave in yet another way.

Therefore, if we are keen to live happily in our society, we must follow the rules and regulations that govern our society. If we do not like some laws, there is a legal way of correcting or amending these laws, through the representatives elected by the people. People who break the law add to the unhappiness and misery of people.





Taking care of Bhikkhus, Teachers, Parents, Elders and the Infirm.

All people grow old. All people become ill and infirm.
 These people have to be taken care of. It is also the duty of all,
 to look after religious priests, teachers, parents and elders. Those who take
 care of people in those categories will earn heavenly comfort hereafter.



A RESPECT FOR PARENTS

According to Buddhist thought, parents are deities living at home. The children must appreciate this from their early days and show them the honour and deference due. In some Asian countries, children are trained to worship their parents. When children go to school they worship their parents and obtain their blessings.

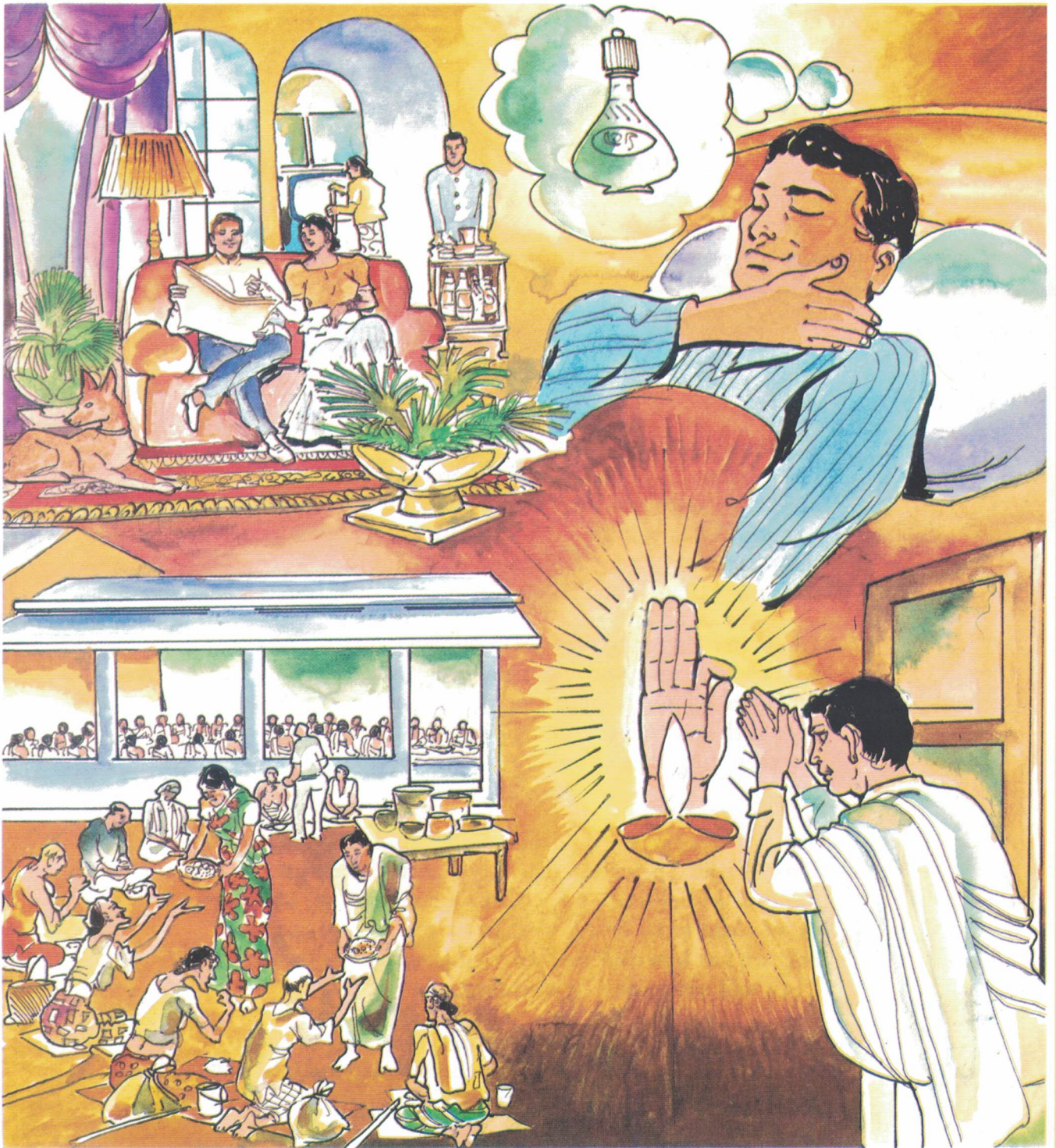
Children must learn from early childhood on to be tender to their parents, returning the affection the parents have for them. Children must never talk harshly to their parents. If they disagree with the parents, children can point out their difference of opinion with love and understanding.

The wise parents too must not try to think that they are always right. They must make it a point to understand the mind of the children. Parents cannot command the respect of the children by being rough to the children. When parents are harsh to children, the young ones might disobey. They will not respect or love them.

If children respect the parents truly, they will never do anything wrong even when the children are away from home and away from their parents.

Children should be always taught that their parents are the only parents they have in the whole wide world.





Pleasures we enjoy are illusions.

While on earth, we enjoy all kinds of pleasures.

There is pleasure in leading a family life. People are proud about their wealth and about their power. But, are all these real? They are as unreal and meaningless as a perfume applied in a dream, because when we wake up the fragrance is not there.

If one is not virtuous, your bad kamma will take you to darkness from the light.



YOUR PERSONALITY

If you are keen to bring about happiness, at least in your circle, it is essential to get along with each other harmoniously. In this, your personality and your general appearance also matter.

You must be capable of being polite to the members of your family, your school mates and to your colleagues. You must be disciplined in your attitude to others. You must show great understanding. Wherever possible you must extend your assistance to others. You have to help others when necessary.

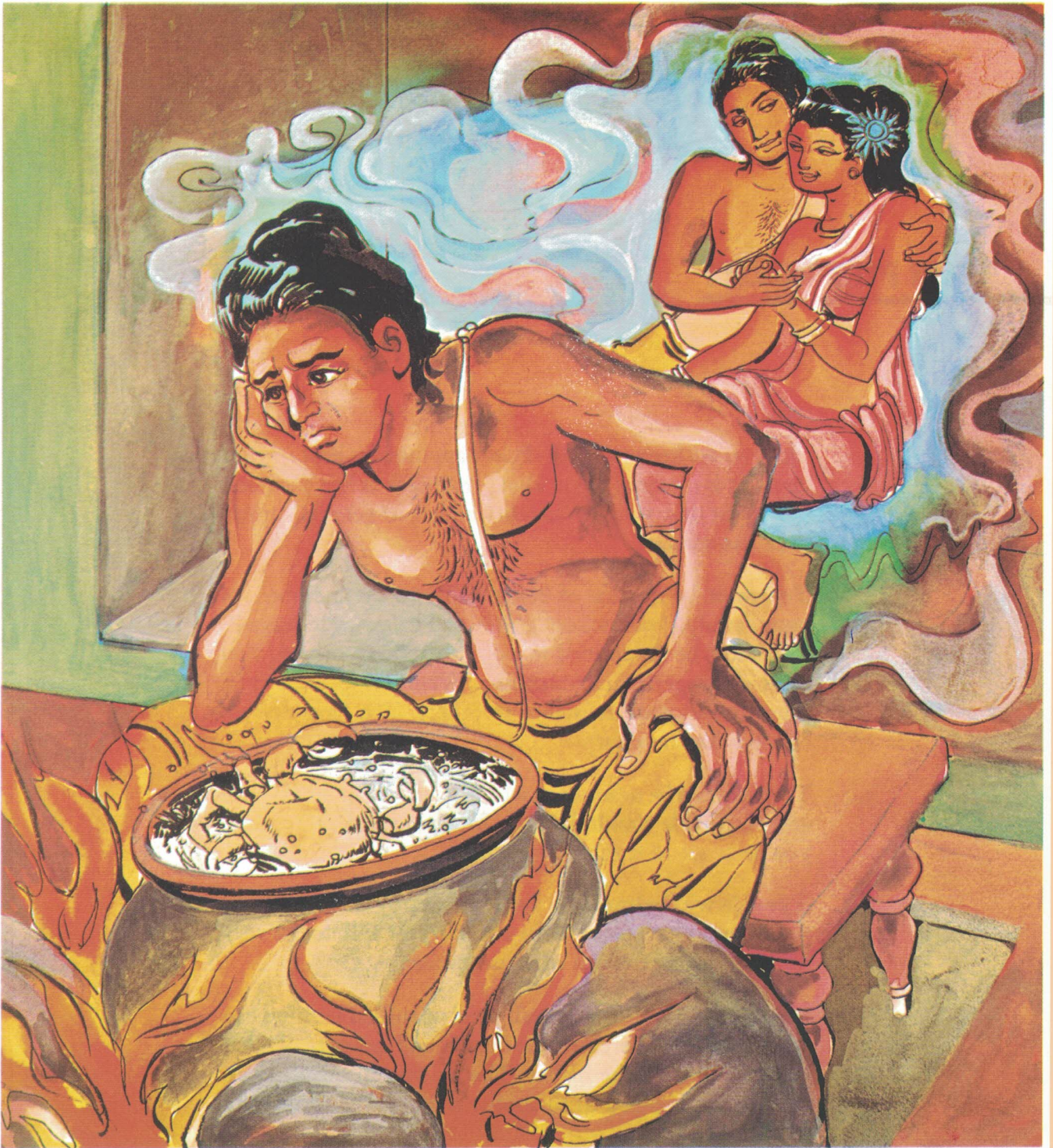
There should be neatness in what you do. Your work-place and your table should be tidy. In whatever way possible, you must see to it that you are clean.

If people with whom you work are untidy in appearance, and if your work place looks chaotic, you will not be very happy working in such an environment.

People who are neat physically and unruffled in mind can work happily. Therefore, the quality and quantity of what you produce will be higher. That is why in most places, calm music is piped in to soothe the mind of those who work.

Happiness depends on one's surroundings.





The crab in boiling pot.

A crab in a pot of water plays about, before the water begins to boil. Once the fire is lit under the pot and the water starts boiling, the crab's pleasures are all gone. Those who are given to sensual pleasures, too, find themselves in a similar situation. Their pleasures are over when suffering begins.



DON'T TAKE LIFE

The greatest possession of a human being or an animal is one's life. Taking life is, therefore, the greatest harm that one can do.

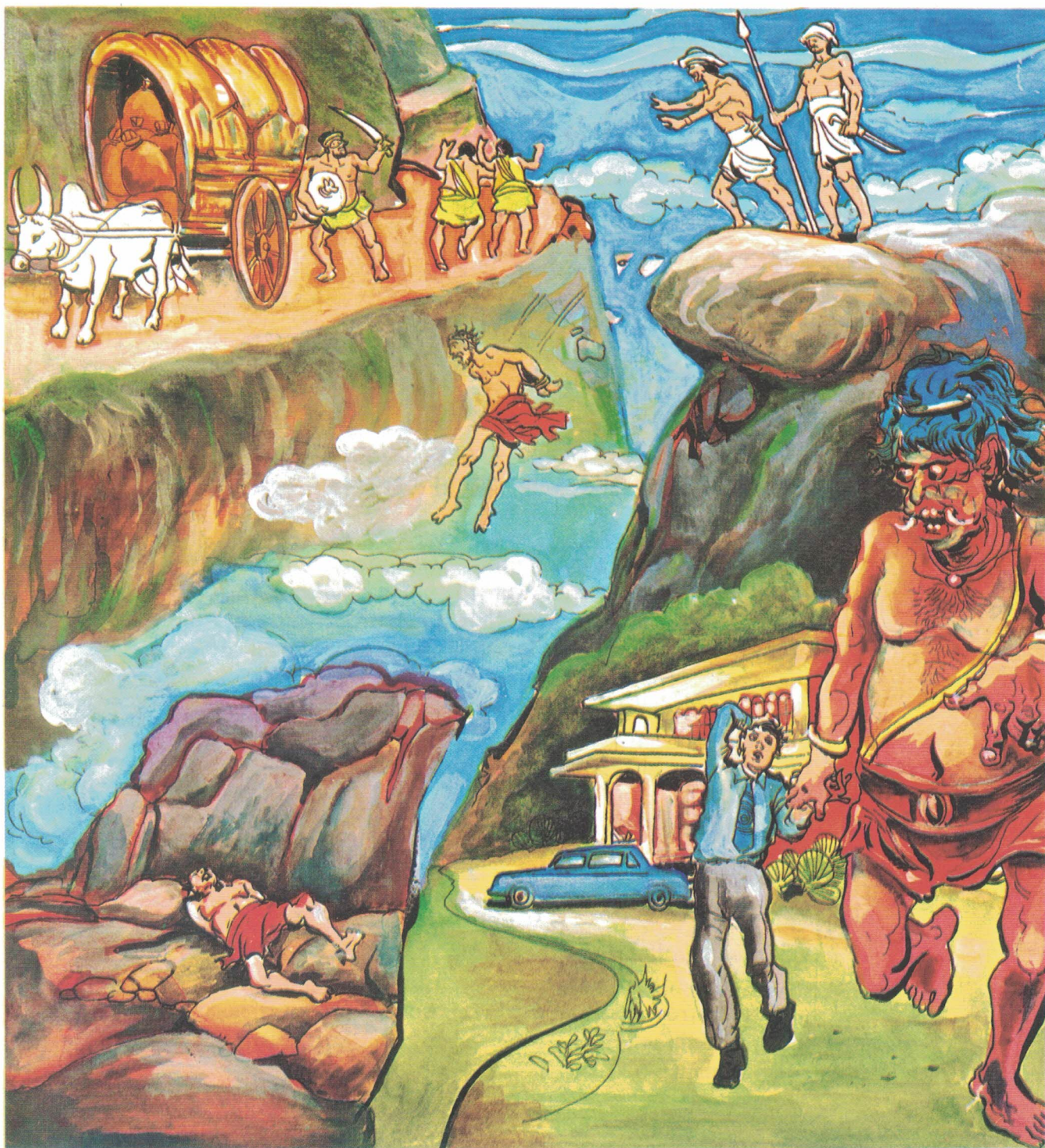
Some people tend to qualify life. Some forms of life are higher, while others are lower, they may say. Once this kind of categorization is made, it becomes proper and ethical to take some types of life, while taking other forms of life may be wrong. But, what is essential is to refrain from taking any form of life. We can develop a vast compassion for all beings, only when we refrain from taking any life. But, when we qualify it, there is no compassion.

People who take life become extremely cruel.

Those who get into the habit of taking life will resort even to murder to achieve their aims.

Children, ideally, should be brought up not even to "kill" a plant. Love of people can come mainly by restraining the urge to destroy anything that has life. Therefore, refraining from killing is one of the foremost lessons in being truly human.





The bandit hurled down a precipice to death.

When a bandit is found guilty he is sentenced to death.
 The punishment is carried out by throwing him down a precipice.
 He invariably falls down on a rock and dies, his body broken. But, while he
 falls down his, body is comforted by the wind as it rushes past him.
 Men and women are also similar because they enjoy sensual pleasures
 while being subject to death and decay.



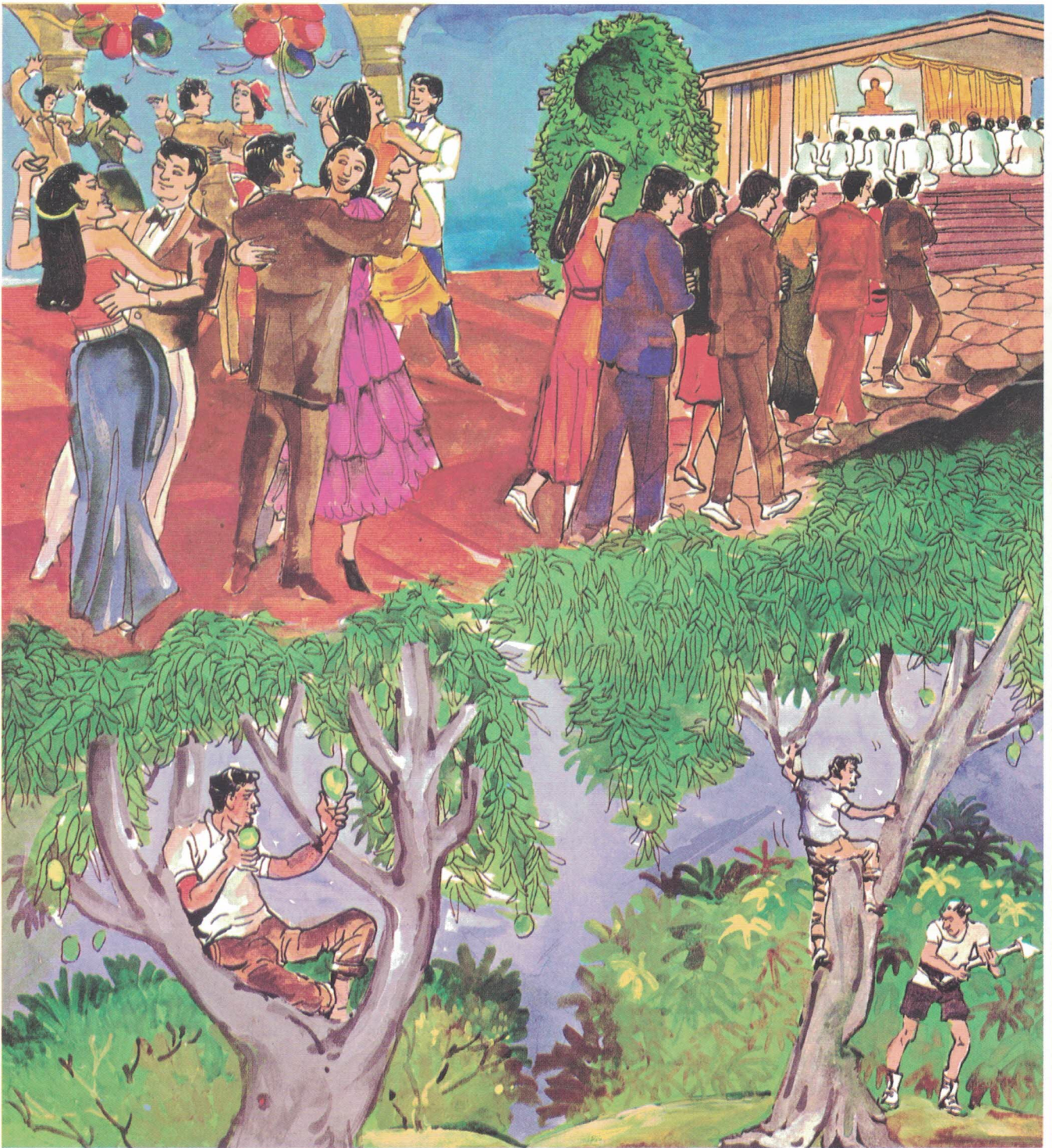
RELIGIOUS TOLERANCE

In the building blocks of happiness a main item is tolerance. We must be able to respect each other's feelings — each other's beliefs. In the modern world almost all countries are multi-religious and multi-racial. In such a society if there is no tolerance for the views of others, happiness cannot be achieved. People are very emotional about their religious feelings. If someone were to hurt their religious susceptibilities people will take it very hard. Therefore, to preserve communal harmony and social integration, it is very essential that we should practise religious tolerance.

Our views about the universe, about the faith of man, about ultimate good may differ, but, we must always understand that people have a right to hold whatever views they like. The views held by one person may not actually be those held by another, but, does it matter? In about a million things we are likely to have different view-points. What do we eat? What do we wear? How do we travel? What do we read? What do we study? In such a vast variety of things, people differ. But, still, we can very happily and harmoniously get along with each other in the midst of all those many differences. We should have the same attitude towards religious differences as well. There, too, we must be capable of getting along with each other, whatever differences there could be in our beliefs. In the history of Buddhism, religious tolerance has been upheld as a characteristic mark of Buddhist thinking. Emperor Asoka in his Buddhist Edicts has quite clearly indicated that religious tolerance has to be carefully cultivated.

If we are trying to bring about happiness, it is centrally important that we must train people to accept the fact that they are likely to have views that are not similar. But, that should not make any difference to our ability to work together. In the modern world it is not easy for people to understand the nature of religions that are not their own. If people try to see where other religions differ from one's it will be easy for people to have mutual tolerance. That way there will not be disputes or conflicts. There will be only proper understanding. And that kind of understanding, stemming from true tolerance, is the foundation of happiness in a multi-religious world.





Renounce sensual pleasures.

People everywhere indulge in sensual pleasures.
 But, they must have the wisdom to do away with those
 when they see the suffering brought on by such activities. Consider the person
 who climbs a tree and sits on a branch enjoying its delicious fruits.
 Will he not come down, if he is truly wise, when he sees
 the tree being cut down from below?



EXAMPLE IS ALWAYS BETTER THAN THE ADVICE

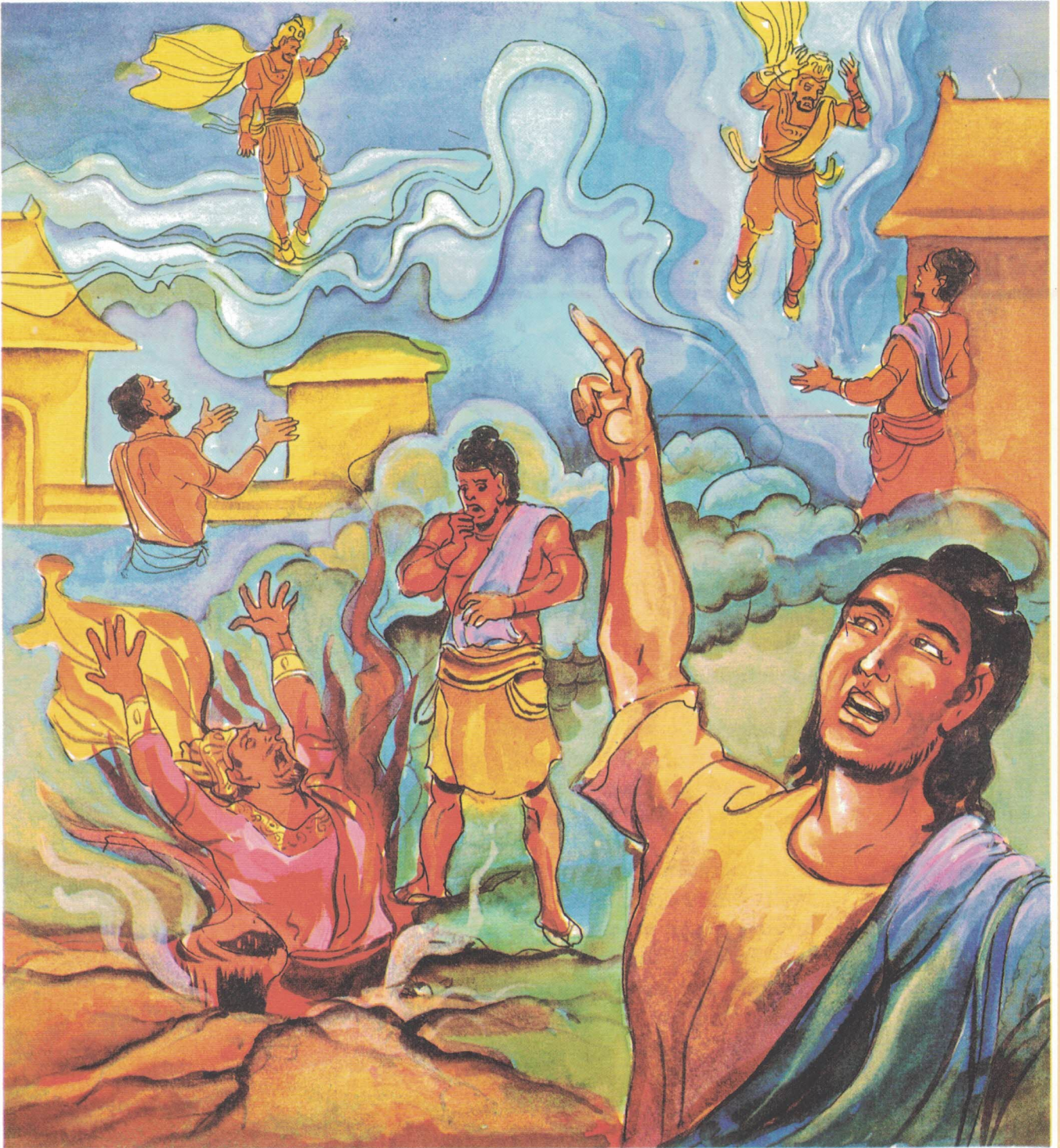
All the world over children are endlessly advised. They are given advice at home, at school, at the place of worship. When relations visit them, they too give advice to the children about proper behaviour.

But, in many instances, children find that the elders who give them advice do not behave according to the advice they provide. This makes the children feel that there is no use in following the advice of the elders.

Therefore, it is a lot better if the adults can set an example of right, virtuous behaviour. If, for instance, an adult who is given to lying, were to ask the children to refrain from lying, the children will be slow to follow that advice.

One good example is better than a thousand pieces of good advice. Many children and young adults have photographs of players and sportsmen and heroes they admire. They have won the admiration of the children because of the example they have set. Parents and elders also must try hard to win the favour of children through the example they set.





The King who lost his power due to lying.

Once upon a time, there was a king who was mighty.
He even had psychic powers. But, on one occasion, he uttered a lie.
As a result of this sin, he lost all his powers. He was dragged down to hell.
This shows that lying is a great sin.



TRUTH ABOVE ALL

In today's world, all the decision makers need facts. They can make good decisions only if the facts are accurate. If something false is given, the whole decision making process will go wrong.

In human life, too, if people are told lies all the activities associated with those will prove wrong.

Imagine what is likely to happen if someone were to tell lies about a person. That person's character will get blemished. He will perhaps lose all his importance. The victim of the lies may even lose his livelihood.

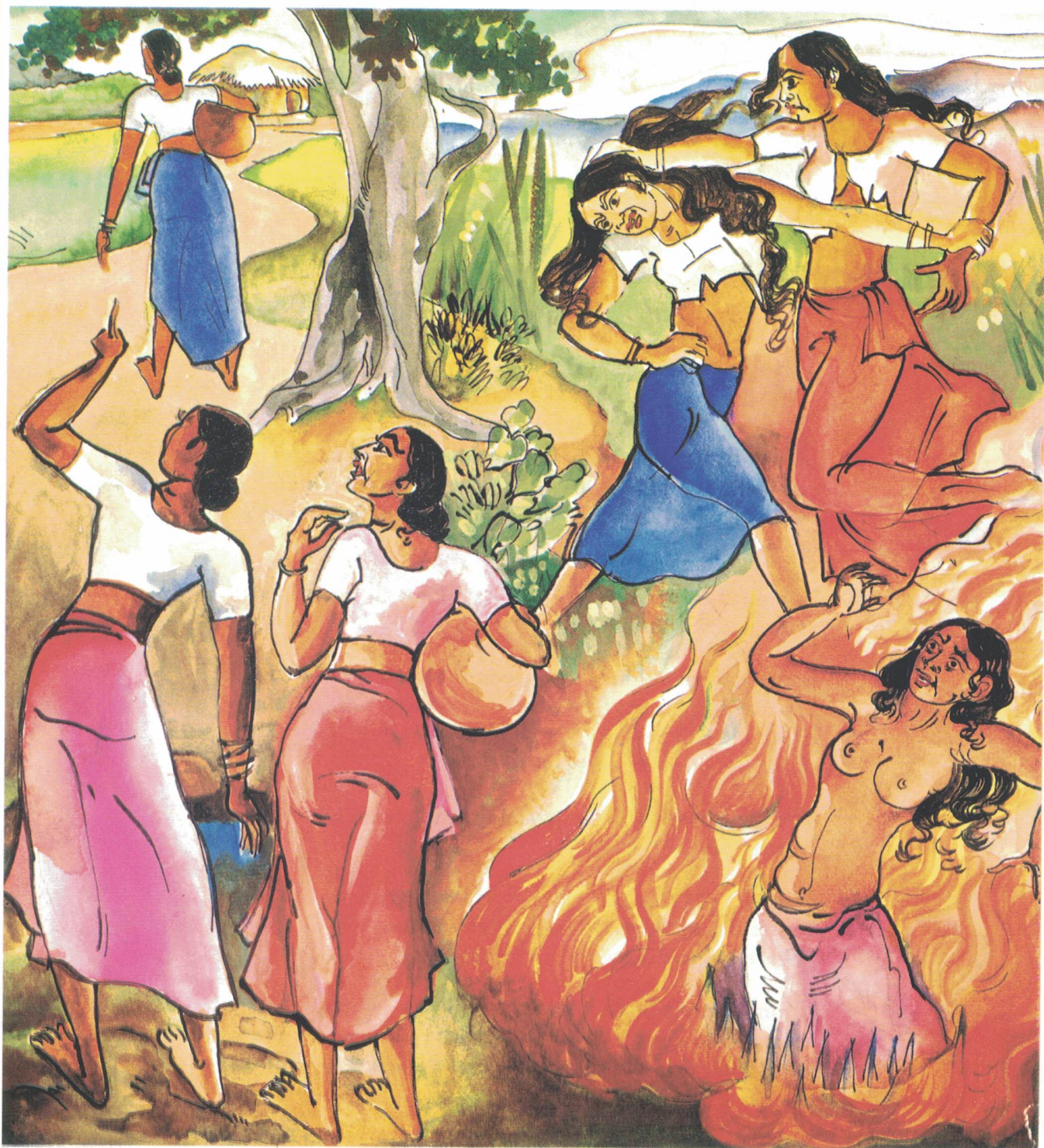
The liar himself will be looked down upon as an untrustworthy person.

Some people tend to lie to better their position. But, this course of action does not generally succeed. When their lies are exposed they lose all credibility.

If some people lie to you, there must be an efficiency on your part to detect that lie. You must train yourself in the art of analyzing and concluding that a given statement is a lie.

Some parents are in the habit of lying to their children to get those children to do various things. Children have to be trained to speak the truth from early childhood.





The deadly weapon of tale-bearing.

Tale-bearing is worse than a deadly weapon.
It can destroy the friendship and harmony between people.
The people who are given to this wicked habit do not know how much
future suffering it can bring about, both here and hereafter.

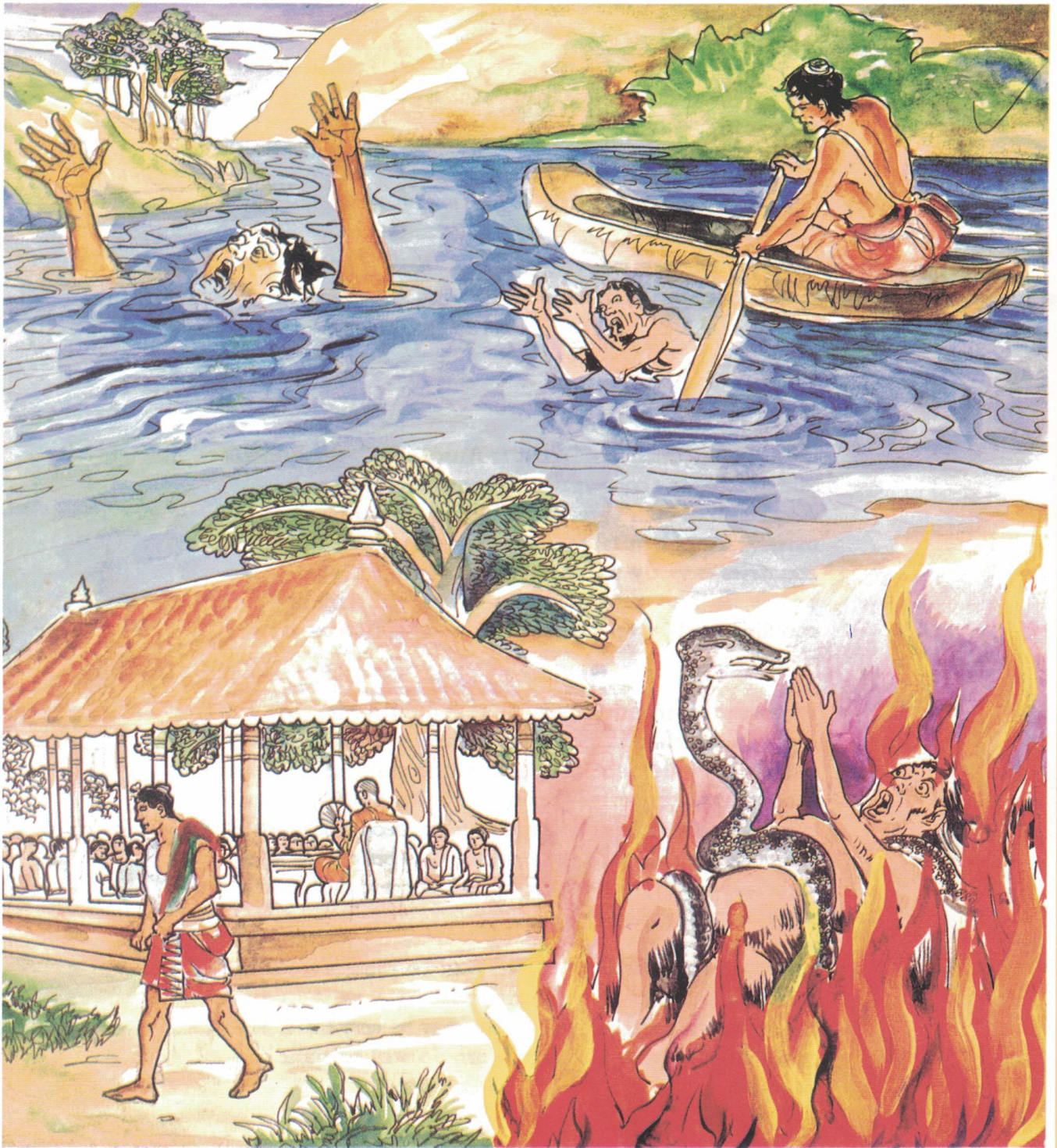
LOOK AFTER YOUR ENVIRONMENT

In the discourse on “What is Auspicious”, the Buddha said, “Living in a congenial environment is very auspicious.” As a result of man’s greedy exploitation of nature, and his massive use of natural resources, the environment of most countries is vastly polluted. The air in most cities makes people ill. The water sources —rivers and streams— are contaminated. Even the ocean is now dirtied by various chemicals.

When the environment we live in is unfit for healthy living, man will find it difficult to be happy. In some urban areas sounds are unbearable. In such a context, how can people think properly? Experts have found that in some cities where sound levels are very high, people become irritable. They lose their temper easily. If people are likely to become angry with each other even for the slightest thing, how can they live happily?

It is, therefore, the duty of everyone to protect the environment in whatever way one can. What an individual can do to protect the environment may be very little. But, cumulatively, what individuals can do will be quite considerable.





Man helplessly taken down-river.

If a man is caught by a flooded river, he is taken along helplessly by the torrent. He cannot save himself. Then, someone comes to his help in a boat. In spite of the fact that the man in the boat wants to help him, the drowning man does not accept that assistance. In the same way when someone is going down fast to hell due to his bad action, he does not heed the doctrine preached to him.



PLANET MUST BE PROTECTED FOR THE HAPPINESS OF ALL

The earth is fast becoming a very small place. It is shrinking further and further. With every advancement in communication, mankind is becoming a "global family." In such a close-knit group of people in a world community — what happens in one part begins to affect other parts as well.

If there is unhappiness in Africa, Yugoslavia, Cambodia or any other part of the world, it is felt in other areas of the world too.

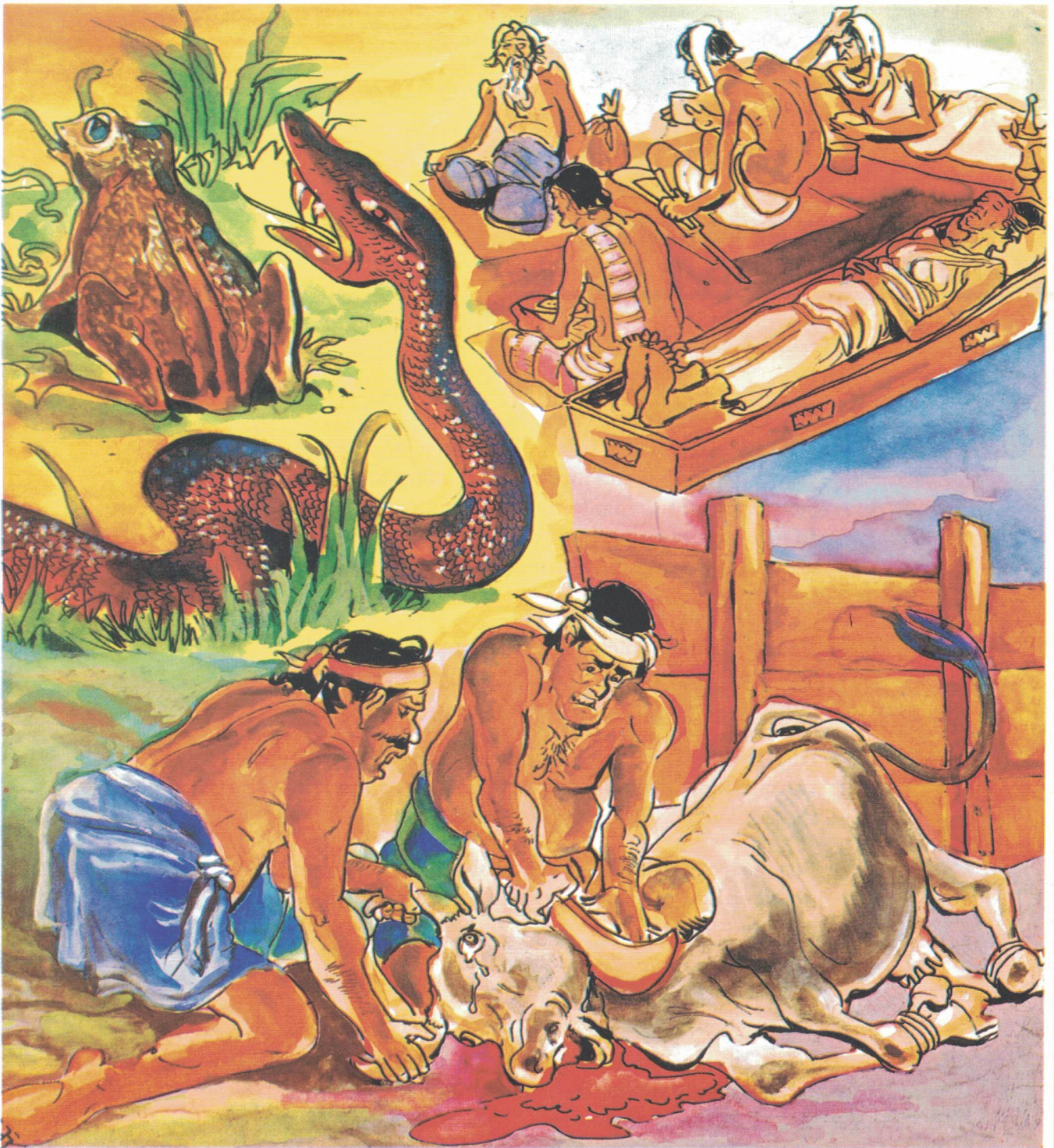
Although you are unhappy about what is happening in various parts of the world —say the massacre in Rwanda— there is very little you can do about that.

But, you can spread peaceful thoughts in your own community. You can see to it that in your group people live happily together.

That is the way individuals can help to protect the whole planet.

Global warming is taking place. This will affect the whole earth as time goes on. You can do very little about it. The ozone layer is thinning. This is due to the use of chlorofluorocarbons (CFC's) by people. You cannot do anything very much about that either. But, you can think globally and act locally so that you can prevent unhappiness in your small community —your little group. Through this action, you can save the whole planet and make everybody happy.





The frog eats worms, while being a prey to snakes.

The frog is in danger of being swallowed by a snake.
But, without knowing this it eats up worms. The frog goes on enjoying
the worms heedless of its fate. In the same way, men destroy other men,
without being aware, that Mara is about to swallow them up.



LIFE AS A BATTLEFIELD

The world itself is a vast battlefield. Everywhere there is fighting, violence and bloodshed. Existence is characterised by constant struggle —molecules against molecules, atoms against atoms, electrons against electrons, men against men, women against women, men against animals, animals against men, spirits against men, men against spirits, men against nature and nature against men. Within one's physical body, there is constant flux and struggle.

Just like the world, the mind itself is a great field in which many battles are fought. Every little incident disturbs the balance of the mind. The mind becomes exceedingly happy when a son is born. At the next moment, it becomes unhappy when the boy falls sick, meets with an accident or is struck with an incurable disease. The mind fluctuates between the two extremes of happiness and sorrow because it is not trained to see the true nature of life. For that reason, the ordinary man will always experience suffering, fear, uncertainty and very little emotional satisfaction in this world of constant flux. But when a person has trained his mind with meditation and sees the nature of things as they really are, his mind is no longer attached to nor tied down by the world. As a result, he frees himself from suffering and the imperfections of the world.

Life is an eternal battle fought along two fronts —one outward, the other inward. The outer line is intellectualism and rationality. If the strength of the first front is exhausted, man withdraws into the second front of his inner feelings and thoughts, and seeks to fight from there anew.





The woman who cut off the head of a goat.

Once, in the far past, a certain woman cut off the head of a goat. This action brought her bad results. She herself had her head cut off, in a number of births. It is said that her head was cut off as many times as the number of hair on her body. All those who commit sin will suffer this fate.



HAPPINESS THROUGH LOVE OF CHILDREN

All human communities have special arrangements to look after the young. In earlier ages this was a mere natural urge. But, in today's world, individual families, state level institutions and global organisations provide dedicated services to ensure the welfare of children.

Whatever these organisations may do to look after the child, ultimately the quality of a child's life is determined by the care he received at family level. The parents, elders and teachers must always be alert to see that the child grows up properly. They must always be the child's friend, guiding him along the right path. In today's world, a child can very easily go astray. Therefore, the adults must perpetually be with them. Until the child can face issues with confidence, on his own, parents must win the understanding and the co-operation of the children by love and make them grow up into wise, responsible, well-behaved and virtuous adults. If this does not happen both the children and the parents will always be unhappy. Therefore, from the early days of his life the parents must bring him up with love, care and understanding.





*Ārogyāparamā lābhā
Santutthiparamam dhanam
Vissāsaparamā ñāti
Nibbānam paramam sukham*

Health's the greatest gain
Contentment, best of wealth
Trusting's best of kin
Nibbana bliss supreme





Buddhism in Modern Issues





*Ayoge yunjam attānam
Yogasmin ca ayojayam
Attham hitva piyaggāhi
Pihet attānuyoginam*

One makes an effort where none's due
With nothing done where effort's due
One grasps the dear, gives up the Quest
Envyng those who exert themselves



BUDDHISM IN MODERN LIFE

The topic as it stands has several parts to it: What is modern life? What is Buddhism? And what role has Buddhism to play in modern life?

Modern life in itself is very difficult to define. One might say that modern life is characterized by the fact that the world is getting smaller; that people are having greater access to each other; that communication barriers are fast disappearing; that it is possible for one to know what happens everywhere in the world within a short time, and thereby participate in the life of a larger cross-section of the world than one could have ever thought of. That would be one aspect of modern life. Related to that would be modern life understood in terms of science and technology. Man in his attempt to conquer nature, disease, natural barriers, has performed certain feats of a technological complexity which is quite mind boggling. That is another aspect of modern life. A third, perhaps a more disturbing aspect of modern life, is that with the world getting closer, communication barriers breaking away, and scientific and technological advance becoming so rapid, we have come face to face with several problems in terms of economic and, political rivalry, pollution, population, explosion, scarcity of resources and the indiscriminate use of resources that might not be replaced. With these comes a host of other issues which can be plainly labelled as "survival".

Can modern civilization survive?

To this one may add also a moral dimension - an ethical question - and ask: "To what extent, in the process of modernization and conquering nature, have we deviated from the ability to conquer ourselves? Has the struggle for survival meant that the modern man has become a slave

to selfishness, bound by his own desires and his whims? Have we lost all the things of very special value to human beings such as interpersonal relations, the anxiety to look after the wellbeing of others, the spirit of being of selfless service to others? Have we lost these?

So when one thinks of modern life one can think in terms of a great degree of optimism and, and at the same time, an equal degree of pessimism. One can be so pleased that we live today at a time when there seems to be nothing that man cannot conquer. Maybe, there are still some diseases that challenge him. Maybe there are still certain places in the universe where man would like to be, and still he has not developed his technology to be there. But it appears as if all these are within reach of man. With this optimism about man's capacity, comes the pessimistic aspect whether we have, in the process, lost something. Let us keep both of these in mind.

Buddhism

Then let us look at what Buddhism is. What do we understand by Buddhism? It can mean many things to many people. To someone it can mean the life of the Buddha; the example that the Buddha and his immediate disciples have set - that glorious feat of a man, who stood before men as a man and declared a path of deliverance. This is one kind of Buddhism. To another, Buddhism would mean the massive doctrine as recorded in the Buddhist literature, which indeed is voluminous and contains several thousand pages recording the words of the Buddha. And in it is described a very lofty, abstruse, complex and learned philosophy of life. Then based on whatever the Buddha taught, whatever the practices current at the time of the Buddha, there

has grown a very rich culture, a culture which has extended to all parts of Asia for over 2500 years, and to which people from various walks of life with various backgrounds from all these countries have made a lasting contribution. A large number of sects or schools or philosophical systems have evolved and all of them, quite rightly, go under the name of Buddhism. Then comes another definition of Buddhism and that is the kind of ritual that has grown around the doctrine of the Buddha as a result of His teachings and the way of life preached by Him, becoming a religion. Whether the Buddha intended or not, His teachings became a religion, a religion to which people were prepared to hold allegiance and which has its own ritual, organization, and ways, or criteria, for deciding what is properly done, or what is improperly done. Now that is another kind of Buddhism. If one were to take each of these aspects separately, and try to examine the impact of what He would call Buddhism on modern life, it would certainly be an enormous task.

To me, Buddhism is all this. It is the Buddha and his life, the doctrine, the culture that evolves around it, and the ritual that is connected with it. Once we take this to be one large body of human experiences, distilled in the finest form and presented to us in such a manner that each one of us could select the part which appeals to us, we begin to see the remarkable uniqueness of Buddhism. During the days of Buddha himself, he used to emphasize this point. One need not be a scholar and learn everything.

Buddhism is not like studying a subject like mathematics where you have to learn all your theorems and different methods of working out the various types of problems. If you know the fundamentals, the basis, a scholarly detailed study is not an important precursor to practice. So out of this vast Buddhist culture, religion, or literature, or the vast body of experiences that comes to us as Buddhism, each one of us would find that which is relevant to our life, to our types of problems.

A Timeless Doctrine

I have often wondered how Buddhism came to be called "*Akālika*" which means "timeless" - that it exists for all time. The more I see the changes that have taken place in Buddhist culture or religion, the more I see how it keeps on

adjusting to the needs of different eras, populations, individuals, the more I see that it has been possible for the Buddha to evolve a message that would remain eternally fresh. So if Buddhism has an application today, and if Buddhism has a place in modern life, it is because of that timeless applicability, emanating from a set of eternal values. To talk of a characteristic of being eternal is a very paradoxical way of presenting or describing a religion which has the principle doctrine of impermanence at the bottom of it. The characteristic of timelessness comes from the fact that it had understood that everything continues, but continues in a flux, in a process of continuing change and evolution. Thus, Buddhism was able to adjust to different times and civilizations. We can, therefore, approach any aspect of Buddhism as something relevant and applicable to us today.

Individual

What are these elements that make Buddhism timeless? Let me take just a few of them. First, of these would be the recognition of the responsibility of the individual. The Buddha is one of the most remarkable religious teachers who emancipated man from all bonds - bonds of supernatural ties, a Godhead, a creation, sin or any other characteristic that you inherit from anyone else (other than whatever you yourself have done). So when the Buddha says that each person is his own master, he promulgates a principle whose applicability becomes stronger as man begins to get more and more confidence in the control of himself and the environment. So if, today, with scientific and technological development, man feels that he has come to a point where his own intellect makes him superior to anybody else or makes him able to solve any problem he has, whether physical or ethical or political or whatever, would not the principle that man is the master of himself - that he has to be responsible to himself because whatever he does he inherits - become one of the most important ways of looking at himself?

So this fundamental approach to making man free from all bondage, spiritual and otherwise, is one of those very important doctrines of Buddhism that have contributed to its timelessness. As we advance, as greater progress is made by man, there will be the greater need for him to assert that he is the master of himself. The more he asserts himself to be the master of himself,



the more is he reiterating the Buddha's own statement: "*Attā hi attano nātho*".

Freedom of Thought

Then comes another equally important doctrine —the doctrine of open-mindedness— the liberty of thinking. Buddhism not only frees us from a godhead or supernatural ties but also liberates mankind from dogma. Let us visualize the time when the Buddha was preaching. It was a time when various religious teachings were in a ferment and India of the 6th century BC was one of the most interesting places that one would like to be in. Religious teachers propounding various types of doctrines were vying with each other to have more and more converts. Beside these new teachings, there were religious systems that were deep rooted. In all these religious systems, the theory was: "We have found a way." "This is the correct path." "You come, you will be saved." Into the midst comes the Buddha who says, "Do not believe what your book says. Do not believe what your teachers say. Do not believe what your tradition says. Do not take anything merely because it comes to you with the authority of somebody else. Make it a personal experience. Think for yourself. Be convinced. And once you are convinced act accordingly." Now this was a very refreshing manner in which man was given one of the greatest freedoms that he is fighting for, the freedom to think for himself. And this, again, is a doctrine or a principle, that gains for Buddhism its timelessness that gains in its relevance to the times as mankind advances. If under feudalism, if before the present advances were made, we were not able to assert so much our right to think for ourselves, as these advances take place we will be asserting that right more and more. We will be wanting to feel that we try to be convinced, after our own investigations, after we have been able to go through the principles, the facts, the pros and cons. This we consider an inviolable right. This is the second doctrine, whose applicability to modern times, and future times, would continue.

Role of Buddhism

Then comes the most important question - apart from supporting what man will want to assert for himself today and in the future, has Buddhism a corrective role to play? With this

question comes the most important aspect to which all of us should pay a fair amount of attention today. While man is making all these advances, we also find that the pressure of modern life - the rivalry for survival, the rivalry for doing better than the other, the desire to live a life of competition economically, politically, culturally, or in whatever form - has brought in tensions. In order to relieve these tensions, man has evolved more and more recreations and relaxation. They apparently result in slight relaxation of the tensions but seem to take people more and more into a vicious circle. Because of the tensions, one engages one's self in a variety of escapist activities, and because these escapist activities take too much time, one has to catch up with the process of survival, and then lose one's self in a worse period of tremendous tension. The greater the economic progress, the greater the political enlightenment, the more the people need sedatives and tranquillizers to keep themselves doing the normal duties. You have to take one pill to keep awake, one pill to get to bed, one pill to relax, and so on. This kind of modernization that has come in, wherein man's tensions have mounted to a point where he finds that all that he has gained is of no use, is a very serious situation. In addition to these tensions comes another facet wherein, with the great amount of leisure that a man gets today as a result of freedom from work drudgery, he has another problem to cope with - that is, boredom. So with tension on one side, boredom on the other, comes a variety of other complications which make many people really unhappy. Today one may ask the question: Are we in a situation where people are really happy or are we in a situation where people at last have realized that, in spite of all that they could gain, they have lost something in the form of some fundamental aspects of life? Who is to be blamed? Are we to blame science? Are we to blame technology? Are we to blame the political systems? Are we to blame the economic system that we have inherited or we have developed? Or are we to blame ourselves?

You are Responsible

Going back to the Buddha's own way of looking at the problem you will say, you have to blame yourself. Because whatever has gone wrong, you are responsible, you are your own master. You have let it go - allowed it away from your hands. It is easy to blame a person, saying

"You have let an opportunity pass. It has slipped away from your hands!" But does that help? The greatness of Buddhism lies in the fact that it does not stop after placing the responsibility on you, it does not say, "Now that is it. We have now found the culprit." It proceeds to the next stage of saying, "Here are a few things that could be done."

If one were to go around looking at the various types of religious, psychiatric, and psychological measures that have been evolved in order to save man or to cure man from tension on one side and boredom on the other side, you would find that there are many, but not one, as inexpensive and as practical as some of the very simple directions that Buddha offers. One would ask the question - does this mean that once you become a Buddhist you would be freed from the tensions and boredom of modern life? To answer that question is very difficult because no one becomes a Buddhist.

Refuge

There is no one who is to be labelled as a Buddhist, because Buddhism is not one of those philosophies or ways of life or religions - I use the word religion because there is no other classification to which it can squarely be put - wherein there is a need to have a label. During the days of the Buddha, people went to Him, listened to Him and if they were pleased with Him they would say, "I take refuge in you. I take refuge in your teachings, I take refuge in the Sangha, the community, the disciples who are following this way of life." Even today, that is all that is needed for anybody to call himself a Buddhist. That, having been convinced that what the Buddha has taught has some relevance to one's life problems, and one feels that in it is a way of life that he could follow with the profit, he takes refuge in the Buddha, the Dhamma and the Sangha. With this inner conviction he becomes a Buddhist with absolutely no ceremony, no ritual of any kind, no registration, no other legal requirements. It is what F. L. Woodward, one of the finest translators of the words of Buddha, calls "a do-it-yourself religion." In this do-it-yourself religion, wherein there is no need for one to label one's self a Buddhist, are there, precepts or laws you have to follow to be a Buddhist? Have you to follow the way of life that Buddha taught?

What is very significant today is that there may be thousands of people who have never gone into a Buddhist temple, never got into the ritualistic setup which has evolved in the Buddhist countries, but who in their own heart have seen the validity of the message of the Buddha and who are leading a life according to the tenets of Buddhism. In fact, we are finding that a vast majority of the world's population hold allegiance to the Buddha for one reason or another. This is one of the most remarkable things that one would regard as almost a miracle.

A Way of Life

The way of life the Buddha preached was very simple. To the layman it consisted of just five simple precepts: do not kill, do not steal, do not engage in sensual pleasures through wrong means, do not lie, do not take intoxicants - a very simple set of precepts indeed. But the Buddhist way of life, the way the Buddha described does not end with this kind of precepts. Simplified in a manner that anyone could understand, there are three things that each person is expected to do, namely (using the Pali words because most of you are familiar with them) DĀNA, SĪLA and BHĀVANA.

Dana would mean liberality, generosity - the act of giving. It is very important that a Buddhist begins with Dana as the first virtuous act which one should engage in, in order to put himself on the correct path, because giving is an act of sacrifice. To be able to give something is to prepare your mind fully to give up something that you have, something you treasure, something to which you are attached. Thereby you counter one of the biggest causes of all the problems which, again in Pali, is called LOBHA or desire or greed. It is very interesting to see how the way of life is presented to us in a manner that, in following it step by step, we get rid of some of the human weaknesses and characteristics that cause tension, and the boredom that is bothering most of us today. Liberality is to counteract desires, the greediness, the clinging nature.

Then SĪLA is adherence to certain precepts or ethical or moral conduct. Buddha was fully aware of the fact that one could not set the rules and regulations for everybody in the same manner. So there are a few rules for the lay people. There are a few more for those who want to



enter into a committed religious life, and still more for our venerable theras, who have committed themselves to adhere to a very strict path of discipline and purification. So the Sila is a graduated thing, so that each person picks up that which he is able to follow for the present.

In Sila, or moral conduct or the ethical teachings of the Buddha, we come back to this original doctrine: they are not commandments, they are not prescribed by the Buddha in a supernatural capacity. Each one of the precepts, which we as Buddhists take, is a promise unto ourselves of our own freewill. And the way they are worded is "I take upon myself the discipline of not killing". "I take upon myself the discipline of not stealing" and so on, because I am the master of my own destiny and it is I who should decide which kind of life I should lead. The Buddha as a guide has shown certain fundamental weaknesses or faults, that one should try to avoid. The second cause of most of the problems we have is animosity or hatred to others. In Pali we say DOSA. Sila is one of the antidotes for this second cause of all our weaknesses. When we follow Sila, we control, or we rather completely eliminate, the cause of hatred. The Buddha was one of those who were very conscious of the many effects of hatred. He had seen people ruining themselves as a result of hatred. That is what made it possible for him to state very categorically that hatred never ceases by hatred, that the more you hate, the worse it becomes. You hate me, I hate you; I hate you more, you hate me more and the hatred keeps on increasing to a point where both you and I burn ourselves in our mutual hatred, and to the Buddha the only way to solve it is that one party must stop. Because without one party, or better still both parties, trying to conquer hatred with friendship, hatred with non-hatred, this sequence of hatred would never cease. On the way of dealing with it is based the entire doctrine of the virtuous life of Buddhism. Because a virtuous life is attacking the second cause of our weaknesses, namely hatred, we have in Buddhism a most interesting, and again a timeless doctrine, of loving kindness. Loving kindness, which is the cornerstone of Buddhism, (the foundation on which the Buddhist doctrine is built) has not been taken by the Buddha as merely a simple ethical principle. He analysed the principle of loving kindness into four aspects and called them the four states of sublime life.

Four Virtues

The first of them is **METTĀ** —loving kindness— which most of you, here, associate with Buddhism. Etymologically meaning friendliness, and defined by the Buddhas as that quality which a mother has towards her only son. Metta is the first Brahma-vihara or sublime state of life.

Then comes **KARUNĀ** —compassion. Compassion is more easily generated. You see somebody in trouble, you see somebody who needs your help, your heart moves towards that person and you rush to help him. That quality of rushing to somebody's help - feeling sorry for the other who is suffering, that is another aspect of loving kindness.

Then comes a third aspect of it which is more difficult to practise, and that requires tremendous love and pain, that is called **MUDITĀ** that is, to share in other's happiness - to wipe out from your mind all traces of jealousy and envy, so that you enjoy the wellbeing of the other person, your neighbour, even your enemy.

Last of all comes the fourth aspect of loving kindness and that is total equanimity, **UPEKKHĀ**. You have no friends, no enemies, no one higher, no lower. You have absolutely no distinctions between one person and another and you are totally merged in a kind of unity with all beings, all things, all situations.

So once you are able to live a life in which all these four characteristics govern your actions, there is no place for hatred, there is no place for rivalry, there is no place for competition. So this second principle of Sila looks after this set of troubles that we would have.

Mind

Last of all comes the most significant, and the one to which you will be preparing to proceed immediately after this, that is **Bhāvanā** —meditation. **Bhāvanā** means the training of the mind. The word itself etymologically means development— a further development of the mind. The Buddha believed, and he is one of the earliest to state it in that manner, that everything emanates from the man's mind. The United Nations has as preamble to its Constitution "As wars begin in the minds of men, it is in the minds of men that the defences of peace must



be constructed." And that reflects the first line of the first verse of the Dhammapada. A pure mind, a trained mind, a well-developed mind, a mind that can be controlled at will, a mind that does not go on subjects that are conducive to tension and boredom, but keeps alert, keeps on developing itself, discovering itself and within itself the secret of life, the problems of life, is man's greatest treasure.

I am not surprised today that there is almost a craze, in the highly technologically developed part of the world, for all types of meditation. It makes no difference who preaches what, or what philosophy or technique is adopted. But the fact remains that the people are beginning to realize that a moment of quiet contemplation, a moment of deep penetrative thinking, a moment of well-directed properly controlled functioning of the mind, is an essential thing for the wellbeing of man.

2500 years ago, The Buddha taught exactly the same way. And if there is nothing else that the man of today needs, he needs peace of mind. He wants to get away from his tensions and battle against boredom. And I see the answer in Buddhism, particularly in the threefold path of DĀNA, SĪLA, BHĀVANĀ.

Look at the Buddha's own principle as the basis or beginning of his religious life. We hear of so many people who go from rags to riches but, here, was the case of a man who went from riches to rags, in search of, we may say, peace of mind - that greatest of blessings. As a result, he saw himself, then taught to others, that the great handicap, the source of all trouble, is attachment.

Whatever be our decision as to reaching there, there is a point at which we have no escape. We cannot deny the fact that all modern developments have nothing to offer but insecurity and competitiveness as well as tensions and boredom associated with them. Buddhism offers a few very simple and very efficacious methods to combat that. And with this I feel that Buddhism has a role to play in our life and a role in which we from the Buddhist countries have an important part to play. It is our responsibility to share our thinking, our knowledge, and our experience, with as many as possible, so that ultimately we all see that the message of the Buddha, which is meant for mankind, continues to reach mankind in every nook and corner of the world.



SONG IN PRAISE OF MOTHERS

In the Birth Tales (Jataka) Sona Nanda Jataka, the Aspirant Buddha (The Bodhisatta) sings the praises of a mother in the following manner :

"She is kind, and full of pity for us. She fed us at her breast. A mother is the way to heaven. She loves you best."

She nursed and brought us up with care. She is blessed with goodness.

She knelt at every shrine, praying for a child. She keeps an eye on changing seasons, awaiting the gift of a child. She studies the stars, seeking their guidance to get a child.

In time, she is with child.

Her tender longings begin to grow.

The baby growing in the womb has a loving and perfect friend in the child's mother.

She brings forth the child. From that day she is known as a mother.

She soothes and comforts the fretting child with breasts filled with milk and with her lullabies.

Caressed and wrapped in the mother's comforting hands, the child soon overcomes its woes.

The mother watches over her poor innocent child without allowing wind or heat to trouble the child. She takes care of her child like a fostering nurse.

Whatever she and her husband possess she saves for the child as he may need it one day.

She thinks : "Some day, my dearest child, all this will come to you."

The worried mother tries to get her child to do the right thing. "Do this or that my darling child," she says. Even after the child grows into adulthood, the mother is still worried.

If a child, brought up by a mother with such anxiety, taking such pain, were to neglect the mother what a crime will that be?

If a child were to be false to a mother who brought him up that way, what can the child expect of life?

Those who neglect their mothers will always repent their misdeed. The child should regard the mother and the father with great reverence.

Men of wisdom always approve the person who shows such deference to parents.

Ancient sages describe the parents as Brahmas. Wise children honour them and are always at their service.

Children should provide them with all their material needs —food, drink, shelter and clothing.

Children must bathe them. Children who look after their parents that way, achieve worldly success and after death those children enjoy bliss in heaven.

On one occasion, a certain deity asked Buddha, "Who is the best friend people have at home?" "Mother is the best friend at home," the Buddha answered.



Norwegian debate on TV violence

Stations drop popular kids' programmes

OSLO — The death of a five-year-old girl who was stoned and kicked by playmates and left to freeze in the snow has stunned this peaceful nation and sent people searching for an explanation.

From the Prime Minister down, Norwegians have blamed the influence of mass media, particularly violent television programming, for the girl's death.

The Scandinavian network TV-3 moved quickly on Tuesday to drop wildly popular United States children's show *Mighty Morphin Power Rangers* from its broadcasts in Norway, Sweden and Denmark in response to debate over violence in children's shows.

The TV series features karate-chopping teenagers who beat and bash their way through their enemies.

The Swedish television network TV-2 also suspended broadcast of *The Edge*, a 13-part animated programme about violence, which is described as "fast, brutal satire".

None of the shows has been linked directly with the death of five-year-old Silje Marie Redergard. She froze to death on Saturday on a playground in the western city of Trondheim after a game with three boys her age turned ugly.

Still, Norwegian Prime Minister Gro Harlem Brundtland said that Norwegians should think twice before allowing such "free market" violence to be broadcast by commercial networks.

The Premier said: "Violence on the screen could possibly become violence on the retinas of even small children."

Some Norwegians recalled that the two English boys who killed two-year-old James Bulger in Liverpool last year were believed to have been inspired by the violent movie *Child's Play 3*.

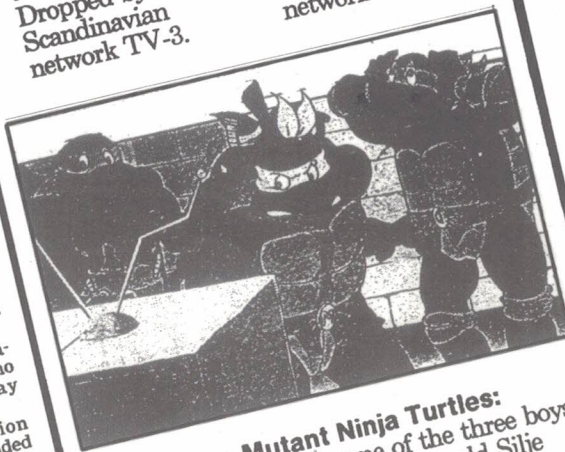
Nobody — not even Silje's mother — seems to put the blame on the boys who are too young to be charged with any crime under Norwegian law.

"I forgive the ones who killed my daughter. It is not possible to hate small children. They cannot understand

TV TERROR

■ **Mighty Morphin Power Rangers:** Dropped by Scandinavian network TV-3.

■ **The Edge:** Suspended by Swedish television network TV-2.



■ **Teenage Mutant Ninja Turtles:** A favourite programme of the three boys who allegedly killed five-year-old Silje Marie Redergard.

the consequences of what they have done," Ms Beathe Redergard told the Oslo newspaper *Dagbladet*.

On Tuesday, the snow where Silje died was covered with flowers and candles left by stunned Norwegians.

At first, the boys — two aged six and one five — blamed three older youths seen near the area.

According to the Oslo newspaper *Verdens Gang*, one newspaper said that he chased the boy away after he "kicked one of them in the leg until he bled, just like the *Ninja Turtles*".

All four children were reported to be fans of the US cartoon, *Teenage Mutant Ninja Turtles*. Like the *Power Rangers*, the show centres on likeable characters who pummel their opponents with fists and weapons.

According to media reports, the small boys persuaded Silje to take off her outer

clothes during a game, then said that they were going to be "bad" to her.

They reportedly shoved, stoned and kicked Silje, then left her unconscious in the season's first snow on the playground not far from her home in a suburb of Trondheim.

The boys then went home. Perhaps an hour later, other children found her lying beside the fir trees heavy with snow, on the corner of a playing field as pretty as a Christmas card.

Despite shock in this peaceful country of 4.3 million people, most Norwegians appear to see all four children as victims.

"The first thing we are doing is to help all four families through the crisis," said Dr Marit Indredavik, head of the Trondheim area children's psychiatric clinic, where the boys will be evaluated. — AP, LAT-WE.

20 October, 1994
Straits Times

PARENTS, CHILDREN AND MEDIA

It is too simplistic, in the context of modern society, to assume that the morals and social conduct of today's children are determined exclusively by the influence of parents and teachers.

Today's child inhabits a complex world. His responses to challenges of life and his value systems, tend to be shaped, to a great extent, by the mass media that dominate all walks of life in our time.

Mass media messages that keep on pummeling readers, viewers and listeners incessantly, are presented in such sophisticated packaging, put together through advanced techniques of communication, that even adults find it difficult to resist their hypnotic hold. The call of modern mass media, overwhelms the consumers and almost smothers them into a helpless submission.

Modern media, especially the electronic varieties, have converted the juvenile audiences everywhere in the world into a TV generation. They have come of age with this medium. Their view of life is derived, for the most part, from the doings of their electronic heroes.

In an earlier age, the children were initiated into the traditions of a given community or a given segment of society by their parents, elders and teachers. A good part of this traditional practice of initiating the young into the rites, rituals and mores of the "tribe" has now been taken over by the electronic media.

As a result of the awesome influence television exerts on the children of our day, during their formative years, some sociologists have dubbed TV as the "Third Parent". Considered

this way, the modern generation of children, is the first group in human history, to have three parents, instead of the usual two. To many a youngster in the modern world, the small screen is the parent, guru, friend, storyteller, priest and guide- all rolled into one.

It is quite relevant here to probe what this electronic medium has done to the TV generation. The blessings of this medium have been mixed.

Television

Some educationists, sociologists and moral leaders seem to believe that the medium of television has led the modern child astray. In most instances when children of our day show a tendency to deviate from the norm towards negative behaviour, these leaders of opinion, tend to point an accusing finger at television as the prime offender.

There is some reason for this attitude.

In many societies of the modern world TV viewing children seem to have acquired a warped view of reality.

In earlier ages, the children were generally initiated into the traditions of a community by its elders. In the far past, when the way of life of most people was primarily agrarian, the parents and grandparents narrated stories to their young. The children acquired their sense of right and wrong through that kind of informal folk-education.

But, today all those forms of social initiation seem to be replaced to a great extent by the ubiq-

uitous small screen. The compelling influence of the home TV set has been able to set aside, in some instances, even the power and potentiality of formal education. A survey conducted in the US established that the number of hours a child spends in front of the TV by the time the child is 12, exceeds the number of hours he spends at school by a factor of three.

A good portion of the television fare that children take in consists of programmes showing deaths, violence, murder, assassination and general carnage. This invariably distorts their attitude to life. They tend to assume that most issues in life are instantly settled by resorting to violence.

An incident quoted in a study of the influence of TV violence on children is quite illuminating, in this context. Once, a young father informed his eight-year-old son that his father - i.e. the child's granddad of 86 years, is dead. The first question the eight-year-old child asked was, "Who shot him?" In the reality the child has acquired through continuous viewing of violent episodes on TV, characters are got rid of mainly by the gun. Therefore, if a person has died, it must invariably be that he was shot.

Influence

This acquisition of a distorted view of life through violent episodes on TV, was emphasised by a cartoon that appeared some time ago. Two children - a little boy and a little girl of 8 or 9, are seated in front of the TV. The image on the small screen shows a young man and a young woman kissing each other ardently. Of the two small children watching TV, the little girl tells the boy, "Don't go away yet. In a little while they will start killing each other." Although the medium was a cartoon, it underlined the bent children have towards TV violence.

Even the animation programmes (cartoons) on TV, tend towards the violent. In children's programmes, the tendency to slant the action towards violence seems a universal phenomenon. What is alarming here is mostly children being tempted to emulate that kind of violent TV action. The children who view TV programmes of violent action most often tend to resort to games that have a staple of gun-toting in them.

This situation begins to trouble parents, educationists and social leaders. There are instances when children hurt themselves or others, when they start aping the action on TV.

From time to time such incidents get reported in the media. An extremely disturbing incident in this category was reported in the press from Norway. Because of the central significance of this incident, we reproduce the reported event from the Straits Times for the 20th of October, 1994.

Tragedy

The tragedy of the five-year-old girl who fell victim to the violence of three of her playmates - two aged six and the other five - shocked the Scandinavian countries awake to the influence of TV violence, on the lives of young ones.

Those countries reacted to the situation with alacrity. As the report indicates, they instantly banned several violent TV programmes that have a destructive influence on young minds. It became a national issue and not merely a personal or private matter. The debate that ensued soon elevated it into a contemporary human problem. 'How to cope with TV violence so that it will not harm the young,' became a matter of urgent concern everywhere.

What is remarkable here is the attitude adopted by the mother of the girl who fell victim to the violence of her own playmates. Her words should echo in all areas of human society. She said, "I forgive the ones who killed my daughter. It is not possible to hate small children. They cannot understand the consequences of what they have done."

The world community should adopt a much more substantial and sustained policy towards the influence of TV, rather than taking an *ad hoc* response to such incidents as the tragedy reported from Norway. In all countries, a viable mechanism has to be evolved to enable parents to participate in the formulation of national media agendas that affect children. It is a pity if the children are allowed to be dominated only by the negative aspects of television. One has to state this emphatically, because television is perhaps the most effective educational tool mankind has been able to evolve so far.

TV can graphically present any subject-matter the children need in their academic pursuits - whether it is history, geography, biology, space-science or even literature and drama.

On television, lessons can be presented entertainingly ensuring absorbed acquisition of knowledge by children. Through "Direct Broadcast Satellite" facilities, arrangements can be made for tele-conferencing, with the help of which the children will be able to consult world-authorities live, while remaining in their own classrooms or lecture-halls.

Skills

The graphic presentation of educational programmes on television could transform the children by upgrading their skills, efficiencies and even their social consciousness. "Sesame Street", which has been part of children's fare in many countries of the world, is an outstanding example of the benefits the children can derive, when the TV medium is constructively utilized. As a consequence of the widespread popularity of this children's programme, several other similar efforts have been made in various parts of the world.

Parental alertness is essential to ensure that the children will view only such TV programmes as are beneficial to their wholesome growth.

In most countries in Asia, the electronic medium of television is somewhat of a new comer to the media scene. In many countries, those who dominate the TV medium are mostly entrepreneurs, people with commercial interests and advertising institutions. They sponsor programmes that have considerable popularity. Education of children or the proper socialization of the younger generation is not a high-priority preoccupation with most of them.

Given such a context, either the state or responsible parental organizations should ensure that the electronic media behave ethically and constructively.

If mankind cannot make the best possible use of a medium, that has vast potentialities for the good of human beings, it is indeed a tragic development. When the medium of TV is badly handled it affects even the adult viewers adversely. In a US high security penitentiary, the

inmates had been given the privilege of watching TV occasionally. A sociologist, observing their TV viewing habits once noted that some of them took down notes while watching TV programmes. On enquiry, it was found that they were taking notes while watching TV programmes on crimes. Asked why they took notes, one of the inmates replied, "I note some of these to learn ways of committing crimes without being caught by the law, once I go out of this place."

Monitoring media for the ill effects, they are likely to have both on the parents and the children is an issue of national significance for most countries.

Impact

Although electronic media - especially television - have greater impact on the people, print-media too are likely to have a marked effect on readers. The freedom of expression enjoyed by print media in some countries, has been made use of for the purpose of ladling out sensational stuff to readers, as a means of expanding circulation. Some of these publications are likely to interpret the freedom of expression, with no sense whatsoever of responsibility. In the United Kingdom, the pursuit of sensationalism seems to have gone to questionable extremes. The uninhibited forays into the private lives of high public figures, have assumed the proportions of harrowing scandal. Among the victims of this irresponsible journalism are the members of the British Royal family - to be specific Prince Charles and Princess Diana. These journalistic goings-on invariably tend to bring about the moral degradation of their readers - especially the young ones.

Such relentless and cruel exposure of the private lives of those prominent men and women, could very easily be mistaken by the young to be normal and ethical behaviour. The young are likely to err on the side of believing that such disrespectfulness towards men and women and the gross disregard of the feeling of the people, are forms of decent, polite behaviour.

Another branch of print media that exerts a substantial hold on children is the picture-story. The 'comics' as these are generally described contain material in which violence, murder, assassination, fighting and other forms of cruel

actions occupy a place of high prominence.

This kind of picture-story book enjoys widespread popularity among the children. The pictures in them have a special appeal to their juvenile readership. The story progresses primarily through pictures portraying action, and the text-matter is kept to a minimum.

Once again, the pity of the matter is that this picture-story format could very well be used for the constructive education and the moral upliftment of the young.

Comics

The "comics" format can quite effectively be used, to narrate, for the modern children, some of the greatest stories of mankind. Indian epics - Ramayana and Mahabharata are being retold through the picture-story format. The Buddhist Jataka Tales (Birth Stories) presented as picture-stories have a marked appeal for young readers of our time.

The addiction of the young readers to the usual "comics" does not seem to take them anywhere in particular. The stories they narrate are trivial. They lack any worthwhile human significance. They may, we dare say, entertain the young readers. Beyond that do they provide any moral guidance to the young people enabling them to lead sound, wholesome, constructive lives of fulfilment? No, not quite.

Parents, teachers and spiritual leaders, should subject these media products to severe scrutiny. Periodical evaluation of their impact on children, either at community level or national level should be undertaken by a responsible body.

Media should be requested to adopt self-regulatory measures to see that any material, that is likely to have an adverse impact on children is left out.

A special characteristic of our age is the juvenile addiction to media. They turn to media for education, entertainment and as a means of consolation when they are bored. Most urban children are hooked on video games - a format once again dominated by violence and aggressiveness.

In a society where the role of media on the lives of children, is astonishingly pervasive, the parents and leaders of society do not seem to be taking adequate measures to stem their questionable influence.

The parents stir awake only when the impact of media is brought home to them on a highly sensational scale. Once the shock of a tragedy like that of the five-year-old girl of Norway killed by her playmates dies down, the world will revert to its usual unfeeling hibernation.

One of the major aims of the present work, is to propose the formulation of a Charter for Media Practitioners, to guide them towards the adoption of proper, ethical and professional guidelines, especially when dealing with material that is likely to have a telling effect on child-behaviour.

That is very much a global need, at this time when the children the world over are in crisis.

Global media have a central role to play, if we are to see the present generation of world's children, reach the 21st century safely and morally unscathed.



A BUDDHIST PERSPECTIVE ON VANDALISM

Vandalism is sadly increasing and common worldwide, but more so especially in industrialised societies. As with most human behaviour, there is unlikely to be a simple or single cause, but rather several and often complex causes. Vandalism is probably linked to the most basic emotional needs and the extent to which these are met or remain unfulfilled. There is a fourfold classification of these needs. These are: the need for love and security; for new experience; for praise and recognition; and for responsibility. These needs have to be met at the very beginning of life and continue to require fulfillment - to a greater or lesser extent - until the end of life. If one of these basic needs remains unmet or inadequately met, then one of two reactions will follow: fight or flight, i.e. attack or withdrawal. The need for love and security is probably the most important one. It is the basis of all later relationships, not only within the family, but with friends, colleagues and eventually one's own family. This need is met by the child experiencing from birth onwards a continuous, reliable, loving relationship - first with the mother, then the father and then an ever-widening circle of adults and contemporaries. When it is not adequately met, the consequences are pretty disastrous later on, both for the individual and for the society. Anger, hatred and lack of concern for others are common reactions of being unloved and rejected. Vandalism and violence are an expression of these feelings. Through a loving relationship, children learn to control their anger or use it constructively; without affection, it remains primitive, and grows more vicious and vengeful with increasing physical strength.

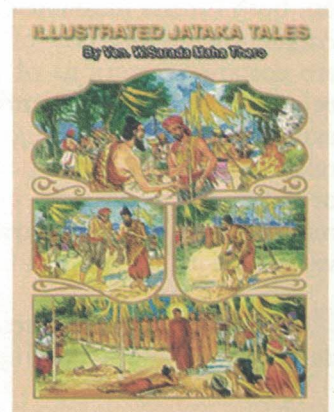
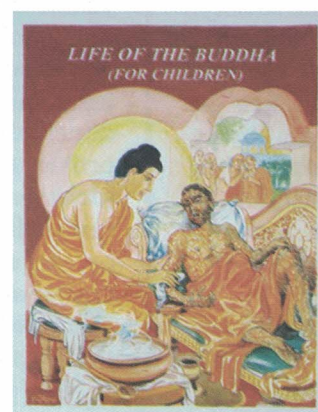
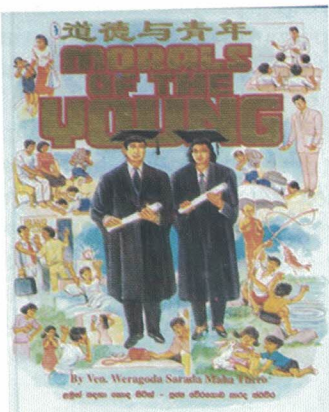
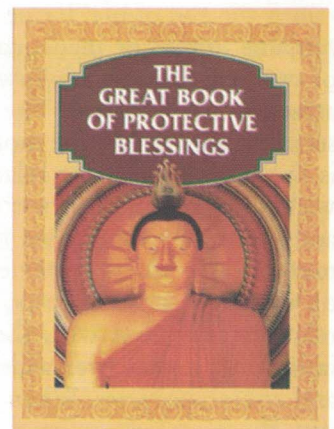
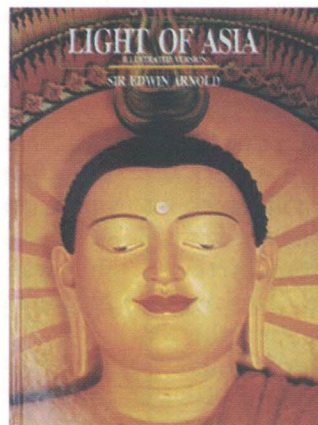
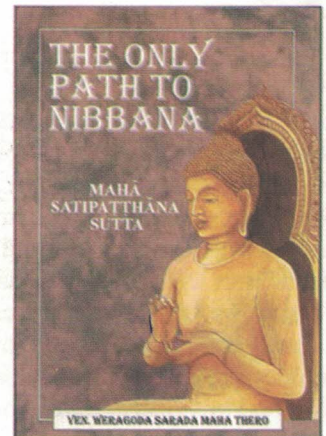
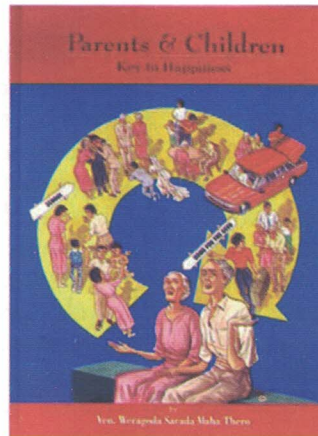
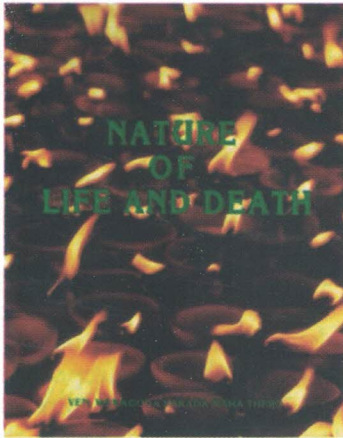
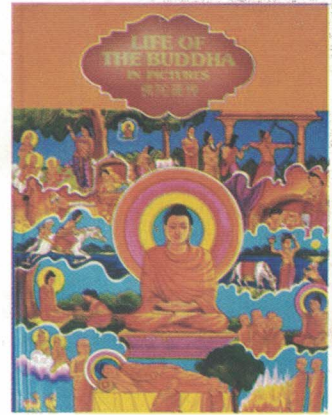
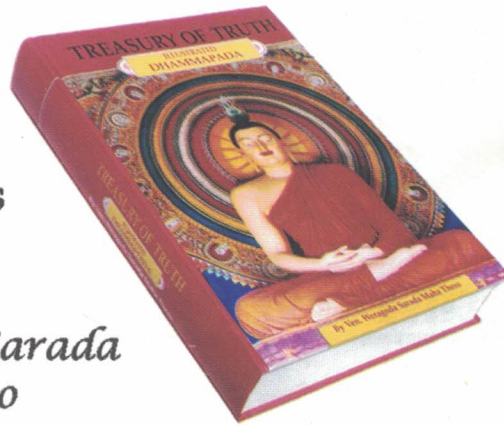
Just as the body needs food for physical development and an appropriate balanced diet

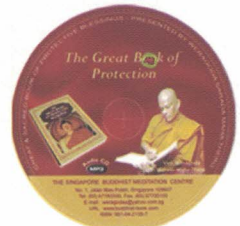
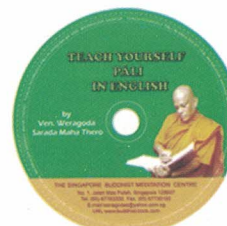
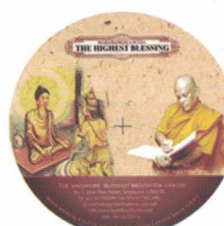
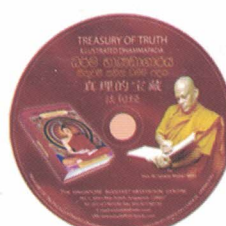
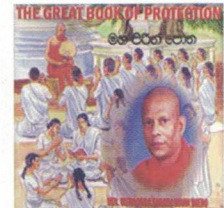
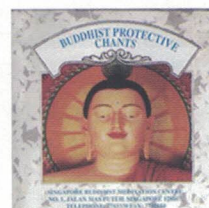
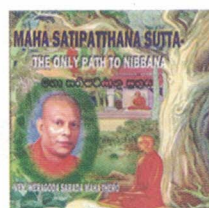
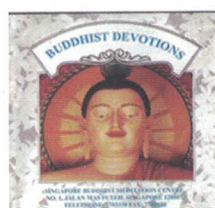
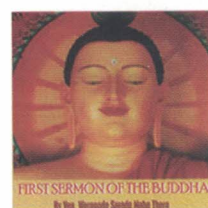
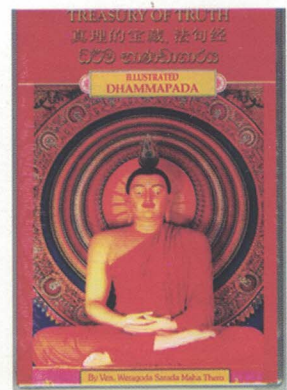
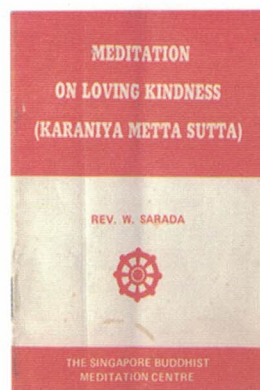
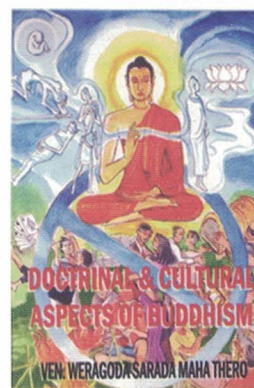
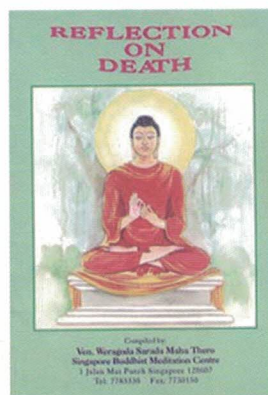
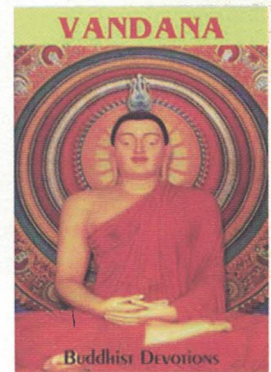
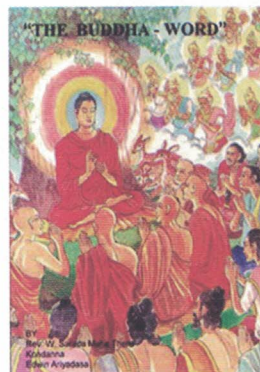
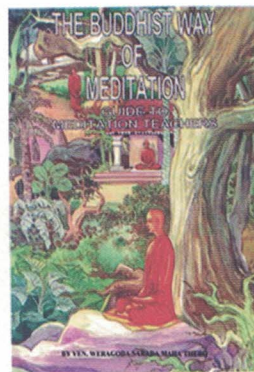
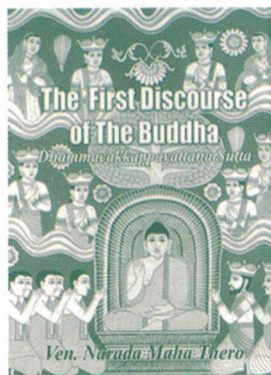
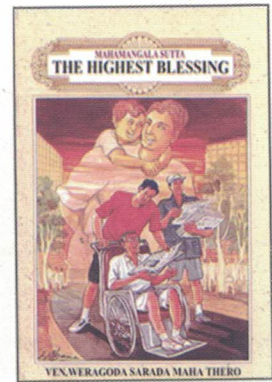
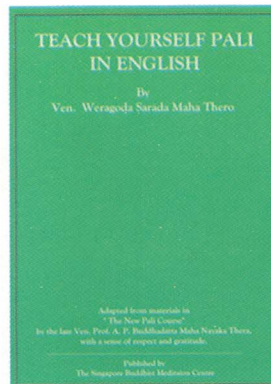
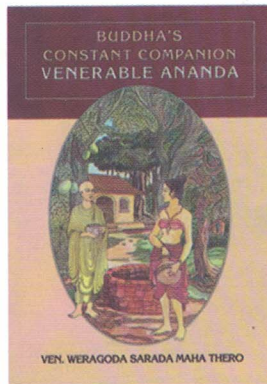
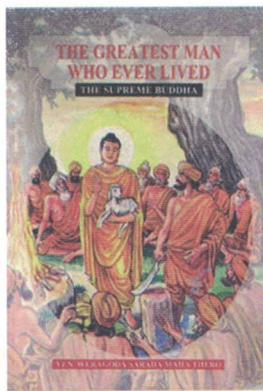
is essential for normal growth, so new experiences are essential for the mind. Only if this need is adequately met throughout childhood and adolescence, will a child's intelligence develop fully. When these needs are not fulfilled, violence and vandalism are the most probable alternatives. One outstanding fact is that violence and vandalism are predominantly male activities. Praise, recognition and admiration of achievements of children, however small they are, are also very important factors for a normal life. When children are rejected by their parents and regarded as failures by their teachers, then they turn to their peers (gang members) to win recognition and admiration. Then it is not too big a step to violence and vandalism. The child who is denied opportunities to exercise responsibilities will fail to develop a sense of responsibility for himself, for others or for material objects. The upbringing of such a child often lacks training in self-control, in waiting and working for what they want, and in treasuring their own and other people's property.

If these are the actual roots of vandalism, as researchers suggest, Buddhism has a lot to offer against the ever-increasing violence and vandalism among young people. The Buddha understood the importance of people's duties and responsibilities, for a peaceful, integrated and harmonious society. The awareness of one's duties and responsibilities, and fulfilling them, provide the foundation for a friendly and equal society and only such a society can claim to be spiritually developed. This is the only way to create a violence-free society. Simply to understand one's duties and responsibilities to other people makes the firm foundation for a perfect society.



SBMC
publications
Authored
By
*Ven. Weragoda Sarada
Maha Thero*





Founder Members — Singapore Buddhist Meditation Centre



Singapore Buddhist Meditation Centre (SBMC) was established in 1979. The picture shows the founder members.

Front row from left: Mr. Yeo Kit Leng, Mr. Dennis Wang Khoo Pong, Rev. W. Sarada Maha Thero, Mr. Ee Fook Choy (Founder - SBMC), Mr. Tony Sing Song Teck
Back row from left: Ms. Gertrude Weerkoon, Ms. Irene Yeo Parn Koon, Mr. Sunny Cheng Chin Heng, Ms. Agnes Lee Peng Gien, Ms. Lau Yoke Kuan, Ms. Rose Weerkoon





This colour photograph of the Statue of the Buddha — the Enlightened,
is reproduced here to be detached and used by devotees.



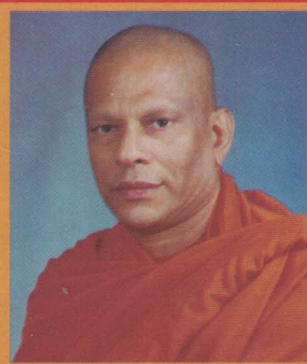






VEN. WERAGODA SARADA NAYAKA MAHA THERO

Chief Prelate, Singapore



The Author-Publisher of the present work, "Parents & Children- Key to Happiness", has already acquired an international reputation for his "Treasury of Truth – Illustrated Dhammapada". The world-wide response elicited by that work has earned its Author Ven. Weragoda Sarada Nayaka Maha Thero a very well deserved popularity as an outstanding producer of high quality religious literature. The present work comes in the wake of that epoch making publication. In this work, the Ven. Author addresses an issue that is at once both topical and universal.

Ven. Sarada Nayaka Maha Thero was born on the 27th of November 1941, in the village of Weragoda in the south of Sri Lanka. The wholesome backdrop of his childhood was formed by his family, in which Buddhist virtues were held in high esteem. His parents in their devotion saw to it, that, the child was ordained at the tender age of 12, as a novice monk, he evolved in knowledge and wisdom under the guidance of his spiritual tutor Ven. Pandit Yatalamatte Vajiragana Nayaka Thero, Chief Prelate of Galu Korale. At 22, the young monk received his higher ordination. The Venerable monk earned his first degree from the University of Sri Jayawardenapura in 1964.

In his preparatory phase for his life's mission of spreading the sacred Word of the Buddha world-wide, he spent four years teaching at several institutions. His mission proper began in 1969 in Malaysia, when he came under the benevolent spiritual influence of Ven. Dr. K. Sri Dhammananda Nayaka Maha Thero. After a decade of service to the devotees of Malaysia, he came over to Singapore and founded the Singapore

Buddhist Meditation Centre, supported by a handful of dedicated devotees distinguished by their life-long loyalty. Singapore is the venue where his initial efforts to proclaim the message of the Buddha to global audiences had their beginning. His publications relating to various aspects of Buddhist thoughts, in a variety of languages, have passed the 300th mark.

With an unerring awareness of the preferences of the readers of our time, he brought in to being the illustration - intensive publications. His magnum opus is "The Treasury of Truth" - the English translation of Dhammapada. The day after its ceremonial launch, the SBMC premises were inundated by over 2000-telephone calls-an unprecedented publishing phenomenon in Singapore.

His works appear in Chinese, Japanese, Korean, Laotian, Cambodian, Bhasa Indonesia and in Sinhala. He has a reputation not only as a pioneering publisher of Buddhist works. He is the Founder-President of Japan - Sri Lanka Buddhist Centre. Today, he is reputed world-wide as an outstanding Buddhist missionary monk, whose works have been distributed in millions of copies-mostly free. Currently, Ven. W. Sarada Nayaka Maha Thero is actively involved in the publication of illustrated Jataka Tales.

Taking due note of the multiplicity of the religious efforts of this Ven. Nayaka Thero, the Malwatte Chapter of the Shyanmopali Sect, conferred upon him the prestigious spiritual honour of appointing him to the dignified religious position. "The Chief Prelate of Singapore" along with the honorific title "Sri Saddhamma Visarada." This was on the 19th of November 2006.

Kala Keerthi Edwin Ariyadasa